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LEGENDS

OF THE

LIBRARY AT LILIES,

BY THE

LORD AND LADY THERE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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TO THE READER;

A WORD, BY WAY OF ADVERTISEMENT.

IF you would place yourself just midway between the three seas which form the boundaries of southern England, you shall find yourself on a small knoll, covered with antique elm, walnut, and sycamore, trees, which rises out of a vale famous in all time for the natural fertility of its soil, and the moral virtues of its people. On this knoll, fitly called by our ancestors "the Heart of South Britain," stood, distant about half a mile from each other, two monasteries, known by the flowery appellatives of Lilies and Roses; not unaptly setting forth a promise of all that can recommend itself as fair and sweet unto the gentler senses. These edifices have, for many centuries, been no more; but, on the site of the first mentioned of the two, standeth a small mansion, of Tudor architecture, bearing still its ancient name. Of the monastery little memorial, beyond the name, remains; save only that under a small enclosed space, erewhile its cemetery, now a wilderness of flowers, the bones of the monks repose. Two lines of artificial slope to the westward mark the boundaries of the pleasaunce, where they took their recreation, and cultivated their lentils and fruits; and a range of thickly-walled cellar still retains the same destination and office as when it furnished to those holy men their more generous materials of refection.

What more shall be said of the mansion, or of the domain, full seventy statute acres, which surrounds it? — of the herds and flocks content to thrive in silence on the richness of its fields, and thrive they do in wondrous measure of prosperity? Nothing. — Nor much of that more gamesome troop of idling steeds, though pleasant to their master's eye, who, on its green expanse, frisk and gambol out a sportive colthood, or graze and hobble through a tranquil old age, with the active and laborious honours of a publick life past, but not forgotten. Little shall be said of that smooth and narrow pool, scarce visible among the rising shrubs which belt in and shroud the grounds from the incurious wayfarer; or of such carp and tench as, having 'scaped the treacherous toils of the nightly plunderer, gasp and tumble on its surface, delighting to display their golden pride in the mid-day sun, before the gaze of lawful possession. Nor shall the casual reader be led carelessly and wearily to note the many sweet memorials of private friendship, records of the living and the dead, which, standing forth from amid the lightsome glades and leafy shadows around, make the place sacred to many a strong affection. Romantick the scenery without is not, and for spacious halls and gorgeous canopies the eye may search in vain within. But for the warm cheer of the little oak library, — for the quaint carvings, the tracery of other times, which abound therein, — for the aweful note of the blood-hound, baying upon his midnight chain, — and the pleasing melancholy of the hooting owl from his hereditary chamber in the roof, — and for the tunefulness of the cooing wood-quests, and the morning rooks which bustle and caw, and of the high winds that pipe and roar, daily and nightly, through the boughs, — and for the deep glossy verdure of the pastures stretching forth to the brave distant hills which fence the vale, — to those, who in such things take delight, Lilies hath still its charms.

From the fireside of the afore-mentioned little oak library the following legends proceed.

G.

CONTENTS

OF

THE FIRST VOLUME.

Page

ISABEL; OR, THE OLD ANGLER'S STORY - - 1

THE CONFESSIONS OF A SUSPICIOUS GENTLEMAN 51

THE SHOOTING STAR - - - - 92

THE FIRST FIT OF THE GOUT, THE END OF MAN'S HAPPINESS - - - - - 111

THE CONVENT IN THE FOREST - - - 157

THE FEASTE OF ALLE DEUILES - - - 214

THE WITCH - - - - - 227

THE OLD SOLDIER - - - - 293

THE ODIOUS CATHOLICK QUESTION - - 305

ISABEL;

OR,

THE OLD ANGLER'S STORY.

MINE has been a long, but an uneventful, life; and I should have little to say, and nothing of any importance, were I to speak only of myself. — I have lived for many years in a close retirement. I planted, with my own hands, the honeysuckle at the entrance of my cottage, whose hard and twisted stem is now thicker than my arm, and whose fragrant blossoms cluster on the summit of my highest chimney. I have cultivated and outlived many succeeding generations of stately holyhocks, which have constantly repaid my fostering care, by lording it over me and my tiny domain, during the months of their short summer glory. From a seat which is shadowed by a mighty sycamore, a seedling of my own rearing, I watch the setting sun. For five-and-forty years I have never travelled two miles beyond my own cottage. I have never left its peaceful shelter for a single night. It and I have grown old together. We are now fit only the one for the other. We shall probably fall together; for we bid fair to endure just so long as the necessities of the one shall receive the assistance of the other. For several summers past I have patched up the flaws which the last winter's frosts had left in the roof and walls of my home. Not blind to this emblem of myself, I hope I have duly noted the warning. My little dwelling has become more picturesque, and has more value in my eyes, in its present state of gradual and cheerful decay, than it possessed in its strength and prosperity.—Time has clothed it with flowers and foliage, and with rich tints of beauty which time alone can bring to perfection; while every passing year but gives it an appearance more tranquil, respectable, and graceful. So with its master, may

> The soul's clay mansion, shattered and decayed,
> Let in the light through chinks that time hath made."

But it was not to write of myself that I began to write at all. I am a lone being;—perhaps, without my use in society, and certainly without any of importance. But I have been enabled closely to watch others, who were born to a widely different fate, and to many a busy calling. And, in tracing the history of the one family that has been open to my observations, I think I may venture, with something of confidence, even from this my deep retirement, to treat of some of the affairs of a distant and tumultuous world.

Within half a mile of my dwelling is a large mansion, built in the style called "Elizabethan." —No two of its many gable ends are of the same size or form, and a fantastick variety prevails amongst its crowd of high chimneys, no one stack of which at all resembles another. The windows are, for the most part, large and wide, divided by stone mullions, and surmounted by labels. But here and there, and oddly placed in the dark corners and least conspicuous parts of the building, are others of studied and laborious workmanship, rich in corbels, and all beautiful specimens of the florid Gothick. — On the south, or garden side of the mansion, is a broad stone terrace, from the centre of which a descent by a flight of easy steps leads to a lower terrace of smooth gravel; and so on, by three more flights of steps, down upon three other terraces; each being edged, on one side, by a border of gay flowers, under a stone wall of depth corresponding with the different flights of steps; and thus the slight rising of the ground has been disposed of in a manner which well accords with the old house. — In the days of its pride, this blaze of gaudy flower-garden formed a rich contrast with the lawn of vivid green at the foot of the lowest terrace, which is itself terminated by a brook. The road which leads to the mansion follows for a little way the straight line of the water, thus giving the passenger a full view of the south front; then, turning, with obsolete abruptness, up an avenue of ancient elms, it ascends directly to the entrance porch at the eastern gable.

When I first came to reside here, the mansion had for some years been unoccupied, excepting by a few old servants, whose easy duty it had been to keep the house and pleasure-grounds in constant order and repair. — The property belonged to a minor, who resided with his guardian, and who was afterwards understood to be gone upon his travels on the Continent; a custom deemed requisite, at that time, to complete the education of a gentleman. But he had never visited the abode of his ancestors. — No one came there; — and it was an effort of assiduous manual labour that prevented the carriage-road, of which I have spoken, from becoming as green with weeds and grass as the meadow that flanked its sides.

The brook, which shot its clear waters across this meadow, is the one link that has connected me with the rest of the world; my little world has been the one family that afterwards resided in the mansion I have attempted to describe. — Sickly, and shy, and indolent by nature, — bookish and contemplative by education and habit, — what had I to wish for from others, beyond what my own shelves amply provided me with, — the choicest sayings and ablest works of the wisest men of all countries and ages? And I should seldom have left the "noble innocent delights" of my own library and little garden, had it not been for the one temptation to further out-door's amusement which this brook afforded me. — Like most sedentary persons, the only bodily exercise I loved was the easy one of angling. — My small garden was hemmed in on two sides by this beautiful stream, which took a sudden turn by my habitation, so that, with merely the slight exertion of carrying my fishing-tackle a distance of about twenty paces from my own door, I could enjoy the one rural sport that was congenial to my taste. By degrees I became more and more interested in the pursuit. The love of gain had no part in this; for, when I was more than usually successful, I was perplexed and troubled how to dispose of my booty; and often have I restored an active swimmer to his natural element, none the worse for our acquaintance but for a slight wound in his horny jaw, in return for the morning's amusement and exercise which his capture had occasioned me.

Where the brook passed in front of the mansion, it had been considerably widened and deepened, and contained many a pool of deep water, in which the pikes would grow to the size of moderate alligators; and with these formidable opponents it became in time my ambition to cope. — By degrees, therefore, I lengthened my walks from my own cottage, and at last I got to be so inveterate an angler, that hardly a day passed in spring, summer, or even misty autumn, that did not show my solitary figure, a patient sentinel, at its accustomed spot. This accustomed spot was exactly at the bottom of the broad avenue of elms, where the carriage road turned up towards the house. It was here that the water began to widen, and there was in this place a very deep pool, softly shadowed by the feathering branches of the first two stately elms of the avenue, which sufficiently screened my person from the wily objects of my desire, and from the too piercing rays of the summer sun.

It was here that I passed the greater part of every tolerably fine day. My health improved under the constant exposure to the free air, and with the slight exertion of mind and body which my employment demanded. I was not always idle; for I never omitted to put a book into my fishing basket; and not unfrequently have the riches of higher minds so perfectly engrossed every faculty of my own, that a fish has died upon my hook, and been nearly nibbled from it by his former associates, ere I have perceived that he was caught. A fine evening has tempted me to prolong my walk on the road near which I always sat. For a very few paces further brought me right in front of the antique mansion. Its fantastick chimneys, and the points of its many gables, never showed to so much advantage as in the sweet hour of twilight. So thought the owl; and she and I would woo the sober beauties of the spot together.

Nor was the owl my only friend. The old butler, or steward belonging to the mansion, and who was at the head of the little establishment of menials who resided there, in the protracted absence of its master, would now and then stroll down the avenue, and watch my sport — at first from a respectful distance; but his figure was too venerable, and his deportment too modest, to alarm even my sensitiveness, and I myself first opened a parley with him. He would then stand, nothing loth, by my side, and discourse on my art; for he, too, had been an angler in his day. His observant care provided me with a wooden bench, which he caused to be brought from its place higher up the avenue, and fixed on the margin of the brook, for my convenience. I would repay his gentle courtesy with the spoils of my day's work, and so we went on, in a little interchange of kindness and good will. Encouraged by the butler's report of my accessibility, the old gardener would sometimes approach me. He would bring me offerings of fruit and flowers from his garden, and lament that such results of his skill should be left to wither and fall unseen, untasted, and, what was worse than all, uncommended.

Days passed — and seasons passed — and years rolled on — and I had lived in my cottage, and looked on the brook for nearly twenty years, when a change, to me somewhat alarming, took place at the mansion. Its owner, Duncan Lesly, came to reside there. He had married his guardian's only daughter, and he arrived with his bride at the seat of his ancestors. An ox was roasted whole — miniature cannon were fired — the bells were set ringing — and every possible noise was made that could be supposed to express rustic rejoicing, congratulation, and welcome. I retired within my own quiet shell, and for some weeks did not venture even to look forth over my clipped garden hedge.

There were some weighty reasons that told against my future visits to my bench and the pikes. First, I had no right to keep possession of another man's bench, and catch his fish, without his permission, now that he was come to look after his own. Secondly, there had been so few things in this world that I had ever wished to do, that I never had had to ask a favour in my life, and I did not like to begin to do it now. And there was a third reason, and a better one than both the others: that very spot, in which I had for so many years enjoyed such perfect solitude, was now, perhaps, the most publick that could be chosen. The carriage road, which passed it so closely, was now continually beset with carriages and company — with equestrians and pedestrians — with every thing that could most annoy a man of my retired habits. Neighbours from all parts had to pass that way, to pay their congratulatory visits at the mansion. That same road led to the parish church — to the village — to the farm — to the dairy — to the main publick road ! — in short, my bench was no longer a fitting place for me ; so I reduced my thoughts to their original boundaries, — caught gudgeons and small fry, and was just as happy and contented as before I had discovered and molested the haunts of the more noble prey.

But, in spite of myself, I was doomed to face the world. The old servants had informed their master, not only of my existence, but of my former habits, and I was startled one morning by a visit from my new neighbour. He came to request I would return to my amusement on his grounds; that I would still consider the bench as belonging solely to myself; and said so much, and so obligingly, that I had pledged my promise to do as he desired, before I had arranged the terms in which, at the outset, it had been my firm purpose to decline his civility. What else could I do? It was not in my nature to be morose and ungracious, and who would not have been influenced by the mild and winning manners of Duncan Lesly? To ease all difficulties, I resolved to comply, and to return to my bench and my fishing, just so often as might suffice henceforward to mark that I was not ungrateful for his attentive kindness. Accordingly, I soon sacrificed myself to a day of publick restraint, (as I fancied it would be,) and I shrunk as I perceived Mr. Lesly approaching me by the avenue. He was accompanied by a lady. I could not escape.

He presented to me his young and pretty

bride;—and then he added, "Now do not fancy that we mean to torment you thus every day—only consent to come here as often as you used to do, and we will neglect you to your heart's content—only let us see you here. You have enjoyed this calm spot before I, its nominal owner, knew of it. You must be acquainted with us too in time; but we need not hurry you; for I am come to pass the rest of my life in this beautiful place. I like it so much, that not a thing shall be done but to keep it as it is."

I felt as if I could have thanked him both audibly and eloquently;—for my fear had been, that his taste might be corrupted by the fashion of the day,—which was then quite against old mansions,—and I dreaded lest he should have brought home with him from Italy that strange rage for Roman architecture, which so ill accords with our soil, our atmosphere, and our domestick habits.

Thus persuaded and encouraged, what could

I do but comply? I did return again and again to my bench, and I did continue to use it, and consider it as my own. — My kind neighbours kept their promise. They would pass me, and repass me, and would not even notice me, unless I seemed to court it. — They let me see that I was no hinderance to them; — and it would have been difficult, indeed, for me to find a grievance in this slight intercourse with them. By degrees, too, the arrivals were less frequent. The family was now settled in its home, — I in the quiet possession of my bench; and all went on as tranquilly as even my own ease-loving heart could wish!

I soon found the benefit of this slight introduction to the world. My ideas had become obsolete. I knew not the changes that were taking place even in my own land; and, now that an easy means of information offered itself, I found I still was human, and still had interests and feelings, without which man is a merely selfish animal. Upon any important news, foreign or domestick, Mr. Lesly would walk down to my bench, and read me passages from his letters and the daily papers, and enlighten my mind, by his agreeable conversation, on the affairs and topicks of the day. It was impossible not to like him; he was so amiable, benevolent, and unaffected. He presented a fair picture of a useful and domestick life; and, if one may so say of any being in this world, *he* must have been, at the time I am speaking of, a really happy man!—Within the first year of his marriage, the birth of a son added to his content. The second year brought a daughter. I still remember the thankful joyful expression of his countenance, as, on both occasions, he hastened to inform me himself of the glad tidings. I grieve to proceed,—for I have now done with recording the happiness of this worthy gentleman! Two years after this last event, the whole place was thrown into consternation; for the young wife died in giving birth to a second daughter!—

No merry peal announced or welcomed the little stranger; but the bell tolled a sad funeral knell, and marked her, from her birth, the child of misfortune!

All was now changed, and, in a few weeks, Duncan Lesly left the mansion. I did not see him. — His affliction was too deep to admit of alleviation from aught but the lapse of time. — He took with him his two elder children. The infant Isabel was left under the care of a skilful nurse, but remained so sickly and tender that every succeeding day was expected to terminate her slender hold on life. But still the little girl lived on, and showed a degree of vigour that at length gave hopes she might be spared. Medical treatment was abandoned: nature was permitted to be the only guide, and the free air her only medicine; and the child lived and grew.

The following year I received a letter from Mr. Lesly, desiring my performance of a little act of friendship. He had caused a monument of his wife to be prepared. It was now ready, and he asked me to superintend the erection of it in the parish church.— It had been executed under his own eye by one of the first sculptors of the time. The design, which was noble in its extreme simplicity, was his own. On a deep step, at the foot of a broken column, one female figure, of the full size of life, and intended to personate Religion, sat, in calm dignity. Both the attitude and the execution of this figure were very beautiful. The whole was of spotless white marble. It was placed on one side of the altar, and formed a prominent feature in the venerable little church,—while it afforded to the moralist a durable memorial of the short duration of youth, beauty, and earthly happiness!

In the year following, the family returned to the mansion; and the infant Isabel was, for the first time, surrounded by those to whom she naturally belonged.— At first, she shrunk, with timid alarm, from the caresses of her father, and the rough play of the children.

I had been hitherto the only stranger that had noticed her; and, as if the poor child could understand the tender compassion her motherless and deserted infancy had excited within my breast, she continued to treat me as her best friend. She would welcome me with a little scream of joy, and never appeared so happy as when her nurse brought her to my bench.

Several years passed on, and the current of time was marked by little beyond the growth and improvement of the three children. The two elder ones were healthy and strong, and nothing interrupted their progress; but Isabel! —she seemed ever to fluctuate between sickness and health—life and death. Never did a child appear more to need a mother's watchful care. The youngest of the three, she was the tallest of all. Her frail slender form was never erect. She leaned upon, or clung to, what was nearest to her; and, if no support happened to be at hand, she would recline upon the ground; and thus her movements were a succession of natural and graceful attitudes. — Yet, full of youthful energy, she ever attempted to follow the other children, till the exertion of a few minutes would oblige her to desist. At the happy hour of liberty from school-room restraint, the children would seldom fail to begin their sports by racing down the avenue. The two elder ones would keep abreast, — then turn the corner with vigorous speed — and soon be out of sight; while Isabel, foremost for the first few paces, then lagging, and soon left far behind, and scarcely able to drag her weary frame along, — would come, panting and exhausted, to the well-known repose of my bench; and thus, in general, would end the poor child's holyday.

She had now reached an age when the charm of childish beauty yields to the superior expression which ripening intellect bestows upon the features of early youth. — Isabel had now attained the twelfth year of her age. — She had never possessed the radiant bloom of healthful infancy; but her delicacy had nothing of the hue — nothing of the painful meagreness of sickliness: her style of beauty was peculiar; and some might have preferred to it the dimpled sunny countenance of her sister Barbara; but none who love to trace in the eloquent features the workings of an ardent and gifted imagination, but would have pondered with delight on those of Isabel. Her large eyes were of the deepest softest blue, — and whether they were cast upwards and beamed with animation, or, whether, half closed in languor, their long dark fringes shadowed her pale cheek, their expression was ever new — ever beautiful. There was something angelick in her smile. What it possessed beyond the smile of other children that made it so attractive, I know not; probably its sudden contrast with the previous and prevalent expression of her countenance, which was a little pensive, might have added to its fascination. But, in my opinion, all these charms gave way to the one produced by the touching tones of her voice. Often left, as she was, by the others, to her own resources for amusement, she would slowly stroll about the terraces, singing her nursery legends and ballads, — while her clear soft tones gave them a wild beauty which they could never otherwise have acquired.

At this time, young Lesly was placed at school. The children parted, with many tears, and his absence was lamented as long as the buoyant spirits of youth could afford to lament any thing; — and then, his return for holydays was anticipated, and gave a fair excuse for a renewal of happiness. In this change Barbara was the greatest loser. She and her brother were nearest of an age, and had always been close companions. While Isabel had been obliged to discover many ways of beguiling her loneliness. One of these, — and I hope not the least profitable one, — was her constant habit of passing a part of every fine day at the bench of the old Angler. I had discovered in her so vivid an imagination, and so much innate acuteness in the little deductions of her pure and artless judgment, that I loved to lead her on to consider subjects, perhaps beyond her years, but not beyond her understanding; and thus, unconsciously to herself, I had conveyed instruction of the most solid and useful nature to her young mind, under the more enticing form of amusement.

But now, in the absence of all other means of passing her time, Barbara was more with her sister; and she would even follow her to my bench, for the slight variety that it afforded.

I had now an opportunity of studying her character, if, indeed, it can be said that she had any to study. She possessed a good cheerful temper; but an over-ruling love of frivolous and active amusements took all feeling from it, and tinged it with a degree of selfishness that possibly was the more perceptible to me on account of the contrast which it formed with the disposition of my favourite Isabel. Barbara was very vain, very idle, but, when she chose it, very what the world calls pleasing. She loved a crowd, and, when she gave her attention to any acquirement, it was sure to be to something showy, and, generally, equally useless. She had no vice; but one wished in vain to trace, in one so young and giddy, seeds of virtues, that might ripen with her growth into guards against the temptations of a world towards which all her propensities and all her wishes tended. I need not add that, while Barbara was our companion, very little instructive conversation took place at the old Angler's bench.

A joyful moment approached, and one that brought, not only the sisters, but Mr. Lesly himself, to that bench, where he awaited the arrival of his son from school. The happy boy, with the haste, checked by blushing hesitation, that marks an earnestness of purpose, urged his father to grant him what he termed "a great favour and kindness." He said, one boy remained at the school, whose parents were in India, and who had no friends in this country with whom he could pass his holydays; and he was in consequence left alone at the school.—"He is my best friend there," said young Lesly; "and he looked so grave when he saw the last of us come away, that I promised to beg for him to come here and stay with me." The request was immediately granted, and the delighted boy had the gratification of despatching the same chaise that had brought him, to fetch his friend.

And now all was exultation and happiness, and even Isabel had no leisure for any thing but the enjoyment of her brother's society.—In a few days her strength and spirits were exhausted, and she came to me for rest; for nothing else, however, then; and, as soon as she could return, she returned to the amusements of the others, which now became daily less childish and better arranged.—The new comer, Mortimer, was a year older than Lesly, and this advantage, together with his superiour skill and knowledge, soon procured him uncontested authority over the youthful circle. A looker-on might easily trace, in his boyish deportment, a decided love of rule; but this, in him, was united with so singularly graceful a manner of enforcing obedience, that it could not offend; and, while he alone directed in all their occupations, the others knew not that they obeyed. He was loved, admired, looked up to by them all; and this, instead of exciting any feeling of jealousy in the heart of young Lesly, was observed by him with pleasure, while he exulted, with boyish pride, at having been the first to draw the general favourite into notice.

From this time, Mortimer became like one of the family, and always passed his holydays at the mansion with his friend. I must cease to talk of them as boys. They now approached manhood, and were placed at the same university, and even in the same college; for Mortimer had communicated with his parents, and had obtained from them ample means, and their full consent, to follow his own wishes. Lesly had chosen the law as a profession, and Mortimer, whose natural talents rendered all acquirements easy to him alike, joined him, and led the way in this pursuit as in every other. Still their vacations were always passed at the mansion.

Time was likewise making its customary changes there; gaining with sure but stealthy strides upon those who would fain be blind to its advances, but exulting in its march and making visible its touch upon the young.—They were now our compeers in most things,—our superiors in many,—our inferiors in nothing, save in that maturer wisdom which we (when we are frank enough to own it) would gladly barter for those advantages which are the accompaniments of the inexperience of youth. No change took place in my habits. Still did I fish in the brook, and observe the while all that was passing within those confined limits which bounded my intercourse with the world.

It had been for some time evident that an attachment subsisted between Mortimer and the eldest sister of his friend. Nothing could be more natural, or more to be expected; and I knew that the good father had not exposed his daughter to the probable result of an intimacy with a remarkably handsome and attractive young man, without having at the same time prepared his own mind to consent to their future union.

When I say that a mutual attachment subsisted between the two, I purposely guard myself from speaking in warmer terms of that which I could perceive deserved no warmer a description. It may be deemed presumptuous in me, (an old bachelor, and one who had never earned for himself a right to speak on the subject by any experience of his own,) thus to decide upon a point so delicate. But let it be considered that, although little versed in the ways of living man, I yet had gathered sure knowledge of the heart of man, from a source that cannot fail, — the experience of ages and of sages. That master painter of the human passions — he who could track them through all their windings, and, ever guided by truth and nature, draw them from their most secret ambush, — he had been my great instructor. Taught by "sweetest Shakspeare," I had been able to note upon how slight foundation the preference, of which I have spoken, rested.

Mr. Lesly had foreseen that his kindness to Mortimer might lead to a marriage with one of his daughters; but, alas! the wisest of us are but short-sighted, and Mr. Lesly could not foresee, neither had he the most distant apprehension of what I early became aware of, and with feelings of the keenest alarm.— Isabel loved Mortimer. Yes, I may say "love," in speaking of the ardent and pure affection that filled the heart of one so prone to tenderness: so incapable of a slight or frivolous impression. Unobserved by him,—unconsciously to herself, Isabel loved Mortimer, and had loved him from childhood. It was the early beginning of this feeling that had screened it from all eyes but mine. It had grown with her growth so naturally and so gracefully, that what had been seen, and acknowledged, and approved, as a childish and sisterly fondness, had ripened into what it was, without requiring or receiving any change in its outward expression. The gentle girl was now again often at my bench. She knew not *why* she loved its solitude, and her kind heart fancied it was in friendship for the old angler that she sought it, and that she passed the hours when there in melancholy silence!

The following winter, the mansion became a scene of unusual gaiety. His family was now grown up, (for even Isabel was seventeen,) and Mr. Lesly made sacrifice of his own tastes, and much of his comfort, to bring his children more acquainted with a world in which each might so soon be called upon to take a part. He gave dinners, dances, and suppers, and the old mansion was crowded with company. I only heard of these things; for I had ensconsed myself within my own chimney nook, and had put away my rod and line till spring. But now, for a wonder, I wished to hurry time. I longed for spring, that I might return to my bench, and discover the progress of affairs within the mansion. The first days of April saw me at my post. I had not long to wait; my dear Isabel had been watching for me, and was as impatient to impart her news as I was to receive it. A good sign, I fancied, and I thought the poor child's heart seemed lighter. Barbara was on the point of marriage, and not with Mortimer! Sir Charles D——, with whom young Lesly had become acquainted at college, had been invited to the mansion. He had come for a few days, and had remained as many months. Struck with Barbara's sprightliness and beauty, he was soon her declared admirer. Sir Charles was young — and rich — and gay — and extravagant; her vanity was flattered — and her silly fancy caught — and his offer was accepted.

I had now frequent opportunities of observing the actors in the strange scene that was passing. Mortimer had been absent for some weeks. He now returned, and I could perceive that his presence caused a struggle in the bosom of Barbara. — Yes! she had sacrificed her *real* happiness to the vain love of show and glitter; and of what the world calls pleasure. Her heart was Mortimer's somewhat more than I had fancied; and, even now, if he had taken a very little pains to improve the preference, her earliest affection might have triumphed. But Mortimer was one who required some great excitement to induce him to take pains. Hitherto success had crowned his views, with hardly an effort on his part. He expected the blessings of life to offer themselves unsought for; and, although he liked Barbara, and was mortified and piqued when he found she had decided in favour of another, still there was nothing in her character that could operate strongly upon his affections, and he took pleasure in showing that the disappointment did not materially affect his happiness. Barbara's pride was touched, and, although, in my opinion, time might still have worked a change, time could not be allowed. The marriage day had been fixed, and there was nothing to delay it. Mortimer concealed his feelings, whatever they were, by a feigned call to London on business relating to his absent family, and left the mansion the day before the ceremony took place.

As he departed, both the fair sisters issued with him from the porch, and all came down the avenue together. Mortimer led his horse with one hand, while Barbara hung upon his other arm; and Isabel, the neglected Isabel, she who most required support, as usual, received none, and followed alone. It was a strange parting, and took place under an attempted disguise of feelings on all sides. But I could read the hearts of all. In Barbara's, early affection for Mortimer was much revived by the thought of parting, and caused a pang which had *now* no business there. But in that same heart there was so much of vanity, of worldliness, that it could not afford to suffer, and she repelled the emotion with a show of gaiety, neither natural, nor becoming. Mortimer was not behind in his outward expression of unconcern, and, with more of sarcasm than kindness, he talked of her marriage, and offered his wishes for her happiness. I could hear all as they passed me. "I am grieved I cannot stay, Barbara," he said; "I should have liked so much to dance at your wedding." And, suddenly looking back over his shoulder as he spoke, he added, "and Isabel too; she will be married ere I return."—"Oh no! indeed no!"

cried Isabel, with vehemence, as she quickened her pace towards him. But her answer was unheeded; the appeal had been accidental—momentary, and the two frivolous beings were now laughing at some new sally. The poor mortified girl stood still for a few seconds, gazing after them with a slight waving of her drooping head. Then, retracing the few steps she had advanced beyond the avenue, she cast herself upon my bench, and wept long and bitterly.

We must now let time pass on for two whole years, for I have little to narrate that took place during that period. Isabel was left alone with her father. She was now comparatively happy; for who shall determine how faint a ray of hope may suffice to tranquillize a loving heart; or by how many ways, and how few reasonable, it may contrive to enter? Barbara and Sir Charles lived much in London. Young Lesly was studying the law with assiduity at the Temple; and, although he did it more for occupation than with a view of making it a profession, Mortimer still followed his friend. During all this time none of them had returned to the mansion. What then gave hope to my dear Isabel? Why, Mortimer was still unmarried — his early friend was still his dearest friend and chief companion, and she never received a letter from her brother, and seldom from her sister, that did not tell of Mortimer. He was still like one of the family.

At length, both young men returned together to the mansion, to the home and the scenes of their careless boyish days, to their father and friend, and to the affectionate, but hitherto neglected, companion of their youth. I marked her radiant smile, — her beaming eye, — the visible heaving of her bosom, when she awaited their arrival at the usual place. A slight cloud passed for a moment across her brow, and told me that the recollection of her last parting with Mortimer, on that same spot, had forced itself, unbidden, to her mind. She paused for an instant, as if irresolute, whether to return or stay. I pointed to where they were even then approaching, and she ran to meet them.

I will be brief. Mortimer was *not* blind; he was *not* insensible; a very few days proved it: a few weeks passed; and he, who had been so long the chosen of her heart, became her passionate lover — her betrothed husband. And now did I, — even I, forgive him his former caprice; for now every succeeding day appeared to render him more worthy the affection of my gentle Isabel. Each day added to the bloom upon her cheek, and to her beauty; for each day brought happiness, and happiness brought health. Her slender form scarce seemed to touch the ground as she glided down the terraces with her lover and her brother. Her grateful heart could read the deep sympathy of mine, and she came every day to pass an hour with the friend of her infancy. She would sit near me on the grass between the two young men, and plan a future life of innocence, of usefulness, of peace! Mortimer appeared now first to be aware of the excellencies of this highly-gifted girl, and suddenly alive to the attractions of her uncommon beauty. He would fix his dark eye upon her as she sat, with an expression of wondering and admiring tenderness that I had hitherto believed him incapable of feeling. All selfish objects seemed to be cast aside, and he would even forget to display the rare advantages he had himself derived from nature and from education, and would only strive to draw forth to observation that mine of riches, which had lain so long unheeded and unsearched for by him, in the pure and cultivated mind of Isabel. He hung over her lovely form in ecstasy — he dwelt with fond approval upon every word she uttered.

Young Lesly was obliged to return to his labours at the Temple; and, at the joint request of the two friends, an early day was fixed for the marriage, that it might take place before his departure. Mortimer and Isabel were to reside at the mansion. Sir Charles and Barbara were absent on a tour. They were expected home about this time; and letters had been despatched to meet them on their return at their London residence. These letters would at the same time inform Barbara of her sister's intended marriage, and invite her to attend it; but her arrival was neither expected nor waited for.

The solemn service was begun; a deep and respectful silence reigned throughout the crowded church, broken only by the impressive tones of the minister, as he repeated the opening exhortation. A sudden stir, attended with some confusion, took place at the great door of the church. A female figure rushed up the aile with frantic energy; her arms extended, and uttering a piteous scream. It was Barbara! — She reached the altar — she clung to the horror-stricken bridegroom. "Oh, Mortimer!" she cried, "spare, at least, *one* sister. Let *one* victim suffice; bring not disgrace and misery upon *both!*" and she fell exhausted and fainting upon the steps of the altar.

The scene that followed may possibly be imagined, it cannot be described by my weak pen. Indeed I can but imperfectly recall what took place upon this awful interruption of the marriage ceremony. The church was soon cleared; but how the insensible Barbara was removed—what happened to the astounded father, I could not even at the time have said. I was riveted to the spot where I had stood. I had chosen one aloof from the crowd, and when I recovered the power of motion and observation, and looked around me, the church seemed empty. I resolved to quit it too, to seek the shelter of my own home, and wait, in anxiety, but with patience, the solution of the mystery, the confirmation of my fears.

As I crossed the aile, my eyes turned mechanically towards that altar which had just been the scene of so much confusion and alarm.

It was not quite deserted; Isabel, — the so lately blooming, happy, Isabel! — she was there — in her white bridal robes — her arms crossed upon her bosom, and paler than the pale roses that still crowned her head; there did she stand beside her mother's monument — still — motionless as the marble figure at its base.

I could not leave her so; and yet I dreaded to approach, when the slight noise I made in passing roused her from her state of abstraction. The poor girl threw out her arms towards me in a supplicating attitude. "What has happened?" she exclaimed, wildly. "I feel it is some great misfortune; but what, I know not. — Oh!" she continued, "friend of my infancy, do not you too desert me; but follow those who left me here, and bring me tidings of my fate. — And Mortimer," she added, clasping her hands in a sort of agony, "tell Mortimer, that I await him here!"

I left the church, and with what poor haste I could command, I set forward to obey her wishes. When I reached the mansion, more than an hour must have elapsed since the commencement of the scene I have in part described. All was in confusion at the house, and with difficulty I pierced the throng of officious neighbours and servants, who were pressing round the suffering father. At last, I saw him, but I dared not break in upon the feelings of that moment. He hung over the still insensible Barbara, for, though she was restored to animation, she remained in strong hystericks. The words she uttered were incoherent; but, alas ! they sufficiently disclosed the sad secret of her guilt ! The name of Mortimer was ever on her lips, and it was hard to judge from her disjointed sentences, whether remorse for the breach of her marriage vow, or love for the partner of her crime, or anger, or jealousy, had most actuated her in her late publick disclosure of her disgrace. But oh ! this was not all the misery of that heavy hour.

Mortimer had left the church with a haste and suddenness that made his departure unknown to all but one, unseen by all save one, under whose keen scrutinizing gaze his own eye sunk, and his whole frame trembled! The injured brother, the betrayed friend, had watched him closely, and he had marked, and closely followed upon, his steps. Lesly had unfortunately passed his own servant in the crowd, and had despatched him for his pistols. With too ready a duty, he had been obeyed, and the servant returned just as the young men met at the village inn. It was said, and I believe it to be true, that Mortimer endeavoured strenuously to avoid the other; that he said something about explanation, and another time. But the irritation of Lesly's mind closed it against all reason — all patience. He called Mortimer villain — base seducer — coward! He obliged him to take his stand. Then, perceiving by the direction of the pistol that he would not take aim, the mad young man stepped suddenly up to him, and striking down the other's arm, a sort of scuffle ensued. Mortimer's pistol went off by accident, and its contents were lodged in the body of the unfortunate brother!

And Mortimer, alas! he had never learnt the art of controuling his own strong impulses; on the contrary, a course of self-love and self-indulgence had ill prepared him for the horrors of that moment. The desolation he had brought upon others, doubtless, had its share in the sad catalogue of distracting recollections that must have crowded upon his brain. There was no time for reflection; in another moment he would have been surrounded. Lesly's pistol lay at his feet upon the ground.——I cannot proceed,—but there is no need,—the dreadful result must have been anticipated. Yes! the guilty and miserable young man died by his own hand!

I received the mournful intelligence as I left the mansion. I met the lifeless bodies of the poor victims in the avenue as I returned to the church. Yes; it was my sad part to be the messenger of irremediable woe, to the one being whom I loved with an affection as strong as if it had been paternal.

Isabel was still at the foot of her mother's monument; but she had clung to the marble figure for support: her pale cheek rested on its shoulder, and her eye seemed to follow the finger of the statue as it pointed upwards to that heaven, which alone could restore her to peace. Even in my deep concern I paused to gaze with admiration on the group. Isabel moved towards me: " Tell me at once," she said; " I can bear it now. I see — I see, my *own* dream of joy is over; but oh! if possible, say, *they* are not guilty!" With breathless impatience she paused for my reply, while her look seemed to penetrate my inmost thoughts. " You have a father," I replied, my own voice trembling with agitation, " you have still a duty to perform, for you have a father!" — " Have I nothing else?" she asked, slowly and fearfully.—"Dear child," I could only answer, while my gushing tears prepared her for the rest, "pray that you may still, even at this hour, have *him;*—bow to the rod, and come with me."

She did bow to the rod, and a murmur never passed her lips, although her trials lasted as long as any thing was left to her that could prove a source of additional suffering. She saw the consummation of her sister's disgrace. Sir Charles procured a divorce, and his wretched wife was exposed, and then abandoned to the cold world's scorn. What became of her, and where she dwelt, none of her family could discover. The unhappy father never rose from the bed to which he had been carried on that fatal day that deprived him of his son, and of all his remaining comfort. Isabel watched him, nursed him to the last. He died, blessing the filial hand that had alleviated, although it could not heal, his grief. And Isabel is left alone; and she too is dropping into the grave, but slowly — silently! At the pensive evening hour, her tall thin form is sometimes seen upon the now neglected terraces. She used to reach the lowest, then the next; but now, she seldom descends the steps of the first, and, when she does, she requires a hand to support her weak frame back again. She receives me kindly, affectionately; but I seldom break in upon her sorrow; for, oh! I feel, that

> "The first bringer of unwelcome news
> Hath but a losing office, — and his tongue
> Sounds ever after as a sullen bell,
> Remembered tolling a departing friend."

Thus have I seen the end of all this loveliness, this excellence. Thus have the busy fates of others flitted, like a troubled dream, across my long, steady, path of life. The child of habit, like others of my kind, still do I wander forth to my accustomed haunts; still do I sit at times upon my bench, watching the sparkling waters as they

> "Glide, like happiness, away!"

They still reflect the same bright heavens. But oh! for the friends that are gone! gone like the clouds of a storm, whose dawn and progress I have so often marked; first, as little silvery specks upon the vast expanse, then gaining rapidly in size — beauty — splendour, reaching their full growth and glory, but to burst! — then vanishing, and leaving the wide range blue and tranquil as before, and without a trace of their short and turbulent existence! Yes; the past appears to me a troubled dream, which, as often happens with a wild fancy of the mind as the body slowly puts on its powers after sleep, may still in a manner be prolonged, and which blends itself so strangely with reality we are some time in doubt which part of it is true, and which is fiction; what of it is gone, and what is still enacting.

The association of ideas, caused by the presence of tangible objects and the scenery around, has often power to restore the past in colours almost vivid as the truth. I stroll upon the road, the twilight veils the neglected state of the once blooming terraces. I catch upon the breeze the distant voices of joyous village children at their play. I start, and for an instant listen for the sweeter tones of those who used to gambol there. I have recourse to reading, once my solace; my eye falls on a passage well known for its grandeur, or its soft tenderness. I seek the look so wont to glisten at its beauties. The page retains the fold, — the margin bears the mark of that rare discernment which once could double my delight by sharing it. Now, I only may remember what I once enjoyed!

I look toward the avenue; my eye, now dimmed by age, would penetrate its gentle gloom. Fain would I court some recollection of my happier days, when that fair walk was peopled by the springing restless forms of youth and joy. Alas, alas! the mind's busy limner plies its too rapid aid; it paints of some the mangled lifeless bodies; — the funeral processions of them all! For sad relief I seek their tombs — for there the havock ended!

And I am, at the close of my long life, even as I was when it began — alone and friendless: for these pages will not become publick till she, the weary one, of whom they chiefly treat, shall be at rest.

L.

THE CONFESSIONS
OF
A SUSPICIOUS GENTLEMAN.

L'homme se pipe. Montaigne.

Arrived at that period of life, when a man can no longer deceive even himself by the affectation of a long cherished youth, but, however reluctantly, is fain to enter, wigged, and the worse for wear, into the army of elderly gentlemen, I have undertaken a bitter task. In this hard moment, my situation and feelings are like those of a naughty urchin who has, by penance, to repair his past misconduct, and regain the confidence and favour of his superiours. Like him, I see a new life, with all its responsibilities, opening before me. Hope animates us both: him with the earnest of plum cakes, and other indigestibles, the meed of future contrition and amendment; me with the prospect of sweets metaphorical, — peace of mind, and respectability, which my youth knew not how to store up, but which my old age must now compound out of new materials, and at the expence of a great and signal sacrifice. And now, — (uncertain health, chronick rheumatism, and a marvellous weakness in the lower limbs, notwithstanding,) I start for the prize of late sought happiness, with, I believe, more ardour than the child who may reasonably calculate upon being on better terms with time in the race. "My gentle fine is this." To write my history, to expose my faults to censure, and, what is harder yet, my absurdities to ridicule, — to bow to the infliction I have wantonly drawn upon myself, and, (like my fellow-victim, the bellowing urchin,) to proclaim in my anguish that I am rightly served.

I include no one in any share of the blame with myself. I do not even plead as an excuse that I derived from nature the vice which, like a baneful web, has wound itself round my habits and my existence. But this I say, and with truth, that I remember not the moment when I was free from it. From the earliest dawn of my imperfect and misguided reason, suspicion gave a colouring of its own to all my actions, and to all my thoughts. I suspected, in turns, and all together, attendants, teachers, and playmates. The joyous frank-heartedness of infancy is a bright and beauteous figure of imagination, of which I never had experience. — The strong affections of youth I never felt. The confiding warmth of manly friendship was a thing I often desired, but could not comprehend. I had no friend, and I deserved none. — For, though I never wished to injure any one, still I was in a state of active and ceaseless warfare with the rest of my species, from a belief that all who belonged to it wished to injure me. Under such a delusion, how was I to entertain a generous passion, or excite one?

Love is the perfection of confiding friendship. I have already said enough to show that I was totally incapable of it; and to marriage I looked with a repugnance comparable only to that with which a cautious capitalist would regard a proposal made to him of a large advance without any but personal, and very precarious, security. I contemplated with great alarm so wilful a risk of contentment and happiness as the committing of it to the custody of another, whom I might, too late, discover to have, all along, differed from me as essentially in views, and disposition, as in sex.

From this reasoning my mind naturally proceeded to a conclusion, not very uncommon, I believe, with less confirmed fools than myself. I was decidedly of opinion that every unmarried woman had designs upon me; and, worst of all, that those designs were, as the saying is, "honourable." For I knew myself to be a capital match. By dint of fearing to be the dupe of others, I always effectually bubbled myself. I was in possession of a large landed estate, besides considerable funded property: and, as is usual when a man is jealous of letting even his nearest connections know his income, I was unceasingly mortified by hearing it popularly represented as being much greater than it really was. I bent the whole force of my mind to vanquish the supposed conspiracies of virgins in their teens and their tys. Nor did I fear only the league formed by them with those experienced parental allies on whom nature imposes the sacred duty of planning and conducting their operations against the oppressed sex to which I belong; but, if some over-persuaded mother, merely out of an overflowing solicitude for the fine arts, ever permitted the picture of her lovely daughter to grace the exhibition-room at Somerset House, for the kind purpose of adding to the fame of the first portrait-painter in the world, I instantly suspected the President of the Royal Academy of having become a fellow-conspirator with her against me; and, if ever the Morning Post, much against the known wish of Mrs. ——, paid a deserved tribute of commendation to the personal appearance of her darling in her quadrille dress, I instantly believed that enlightened and respectable journal to have been suborned by that simple-minded and truly fashionable lady, into fitting out, in partnership with her, a joint letter of marque to capture and destroy my fortune and happiness. Furthermore, if the young lady herself, or any young lady, were commonly civil to me, I resented such conduct highly, and lost no time in showing, by some signal act of repulse, that her purpose was observed, and had failed. Did she take the opposite part? — I considered her only as giving effect to a still deeper artifice, and piqued myself on announcing to her that her ambush had been detected, and that her shafts had fallen blunted from the impenetrable hide of the bear at whom she had aimed them.

In these skirmishes with society my worldly sagacity received several severe mortifications.

I had a younger brother once, a guileless fellow, who thought, in his simplicity, that the end of all wisdom was to secure happiness, and that, on the whole, a greater share of it belonged to one, who, from thinking a little too well of the world, is sometimes deceived, than to one, who, from thinking a great deal too ill of the world, has through life to eat the bread of carefulness, seasoned with this bitter experience, that, in a pitched battle between a sly man and sly mankind, the odds are always awefully against the contentious unit.

He would have loved me, if I had permitted him, and was always ready to forgive, and prone to forget, my injustice. He is dead! Peace be with him, even as he loved peace and wished it to others. — His lot was truly happy; for he died young; beloved of all whose love was worth the having; and was spared the grief of witnessing the consummation of his brother's disgrace, or of ever knowing the bitterness of those tears with which I must have craved his pardon, had he lived, and which I now offer as a fruitless tribute to the memory of his frank affection. He had not within him the spirit of distrust or envious rivalry. His only ambition was to be known for bold and generous bearing, in the gallant profession which he had chosen and adorned; and he never for an instant stooped to the influence of a mean or interested desire. Poor fellow! — I leave this subject; for it is a pleasure to me to praise him, and my business is self-punishment. My malignant genius disposed me to believe that this worthy creature was hoarding up his hopes of inheriting the entailed family property, — and, for no other purpose than to disappoint him, did I set to work to conquer my own settled repugnance to wedlock. Love I knew not; so I seriously inclined myself to matrimony, upon an impulse of the next strongest feeling to love, — spite. The more resolved I grew to marry, the more did marriage become the theme of my invective, in order that I might the better disguise my intentions. One day, my brother, in the openness of his heart, told me he was going to be married in a week to a girl he had long loved. "You must not press me," he added, "to mention her name to you. To own the truth, brother, she and I are equally afraid of some little peculiarities of yours, and, as some of her friends have given but a reluctant consent to our union, on account of the smallness of my fortune, we wish to avoid any suggestions being made, which might, we think, have the effect of exciting afresh a hostile spirit in them."

"Cunning brother," thought I, "and fine words these! A very pleasant scheme truly for preventing my telling her relations that I mean to keep what I have to myself! Reluctant consent, with a vengeance! When, I'll be bound, you have taken care to say that I never mean to marry, and that, (please God I die,) you will then come in for all. But I will marry as well as you, and without further loss of time." I allowed myself small space to pause, and went to work in earnest; for I wished to have all settled and declared on the very day of my brother's wedding. I made a list of all the marriageable women in the neighbourhood, setting down all their good qualities in the inverse ratio, and weighing all their respective demerits with great aggravation. According to this just and flattering mode of computation, my choice fell upon a young girl of good connections, pretty enough, very unassuming; and who, unlike others, had taken no trouble to be either particularly rude or civil to me. It was Christmas time, when, as is usual, parties assembled frequently at the different houses of the neighbourhood. This gave me opportunities of engaging this young lady in conversation. I even submitted to the toil and exposure of dancing with her, and sat by her one or two days at dinner. I was charmed to find her all I could wish. My allotted week had expired, all but one evening, when, fancying the lady and the moment equally favourable, I made her a formal proposal of marriage.

"Good God! Mr. ——," exclaimed she, starting back, and fixing on me a look in which it appeared to me doubtful whether indignant surprise, or suspicion of the state of my wits, had the predominance; "Good God! Mr. ——, what can you mean? Do you not know that I am to marry your brother to-morrow? To what could I attribute your kindness to me but to your having, as I believed, discovered our secret?"

Evil passions are rapid in their march, and full of resource. I instantly concluded it to be impossible that she could continue to prefer a younger brother, after she had discovered her power to possess herself of an elder. Such was the infamous opinion I had conceived of her sex: and, in prosecution of a design still more infamous, I represented to her the advantages of a marriage with myself, and would have imputed my unnatural conduct to the force of a passion before which brotherly love, and every other love but itself, must give way. But she prevented me; and now, casting upon me a second look of an unmixed meaning, which I could not mistake for any thing but pure loathing and contempt, she commanded me to be silent; and, merely telling me that, out of respect for my brother's happiness, she would forbear to expose me, she left me overwhelmed with confusion, having become master of the secret of an honourable heart at the expense of my own deep disgrace; — and she became next morning my brother's bride.

This was a lesson which might have opened the eyes of the blind, or restored reason to a madman. But I was incurable. I meanly relied upon her promised silence, thinking that, for her own sake, she would dread to offend me by the disclosure. I was of a sickly constitution; and it appeared to me to be reasonable that she and my brother might be looking to my death as to no remote event. This idea, once conceived, soon grew into a conviction that they were sanguinely watching every symptom as it might affect their chance of pouncing on the family property. The desire of self-preservation, strong in all men, acquired accumulated power over me; and my resolution to marry was fortified in an equal degree. I was glad to conceal my mortification and resentment by an absence from home, upon a pretence of sudden and urgent business in London. Thither I repaired, and there I remained, as in the most convenient harbour which the world affords to the thoroughly selfish; for there I was little known, and less observed. Still I went into society; my acquaintance increased; and I soon fixed my choice upon a lady who, unhappily for herself, appeared to be well calculated to suit me as a wife. She was of what is generally called a steadier, because a rather maturer, age, than the romantick girl to whom

I had lately proposed myself. She had beauty, rank, and fortune; and there appeared in her no assignable motive for listening to my addresses, but affection. In the uncertainty of success there was an excitement which made me look with diminished horror upon the sacrifice to which I was resigning myself. To make short of needless and very ordinary details, I content myself with saying that, after six months of prosperous courtship, I became the husband of the rich, beautiful, accomplished, (and, oh! how good and amiable,) Lady Anne S——.

I do not say that, in the probationary period, I never wavered. But, when at length my proposals were frankly and unhesitatingly accepted, I had indeed some grievous misgivings. Still, the fear of ridicule and infamy obliged me to proceed. And now began those annoyances, dreadful enough to any man, but to one of my temper how totally insupportable! Now began the inquisition of solicitous friends and interrogatory relations. I had to own to every acre, every exchequer bill, and the true force and meaning of every newly acquired article of comfort or of show. But these were visitations to be parried. For curiosity may always be baffled by a bounce. The worst remained; — a couple of inimical looking lawyers insisted, by virtue of their function, upon not allowing us to marry in peace, without a plenary confession from us both of all we were worth, in esse and in posse; and it was with the utmost difficulty that I could contrive to deceive them with regard to a portion of my personalties. The only thing that cheered me in all this, was the repetition of the comfortable words "heirs of my body" in almost every alternate line of my settlement.

Wedded at last, was I happy? Far from it! I had succeeded to my utmost expectations — I had, as I imagined, secured content to myself, and disappointment to my brother. But within my own breast was an enemy, ever watchful to convert back the elements of repose into a chaos of confusion and discomfort. My wife could not conceal the surprise and dread with which she became by degrees acquainted with the secret of that monstrous power which held me in its bondage. At first she tried ridicule; mild and friendly ridicule, too friendly to wound, or to reform me; then expostulation, gentle as her ridicule had been, but grave and earnest. It failed as signally. She then gave way, gracefully, to what she saw was irremediable. She never sanctioned my follies by a compromise of her own judgment; but, as if she had wedded herself to them as well as to me, she endeavoured to shelter them from exposure, and me from the contempt and danger into which they were continually hurrying me. I no sooner had a house of my own, and an establishment of servants suitable to my fortune, than it naturally occurred to me that all servants were thieves; and, dealing with my own accordingly, I discharged each in his turn, after one or two watchful and litigious months. Their strong boxes alternately disclosed their treasures before the scrutiny of successive search warrants. I never discovered any loss of property to myself, and, in my present penitence, I can only hope that my temper was so publickly known that these displays of distrust never caused any loss of character to the beings who were wretched enough to serve an always unjustly suspecting master.

I know not whether I was the inventor, I certainly was a practiser, of the most odious temptations; and, after habitually leaving money, duly marked and noted, in their way, I remained perplexed to determine whether they had failed to see the bait, or had left it untouched only in hopes to lure me into trusting them at last with a more considerable prize. My house was a museum of anti-burglarious inventions. With difficulty could my shutters be opened at all, so encumbered were they with expedients to prevent their being opened from without; and it was a miracle that preserved me and mine within from falling victims to the concealed explosives with which my self-defending, bell-beset, and bullet-proof, chambers were nightly furnished. Nor, in ordering the internal police of my family, was I negligent of means for watching the course of opinion concerning myself. In the hope of discovering some secret, in which I had no concern, and which it would have been a grief to me to become acquainted with, and, like all suspicious persons, deeming myself the subject of all thought and conversation, often would I sham sleep, or burst suddenly in upon parties in conversation, and sometimes feign to have heard some things which never had been said, in hopes of detecting others which, I suspected, had.

But now to the bitterest part of the bitter task of confession, and to the scene of my deepest dishonour. Hitherto my wife had suffered but little from my temper, except in her consciousness of the unhappiness and disgrace in which it involved me. Against her, personally, I had as yet committed no very great enormity. But no one could live with me and escape. After two years of what might have been great happiness, I began to lay all the stores of my madness under contribution, for means to destroy whatever little repose the dæmon of distrust had left me — I resolved to doubt my wife's affections. I could not disguise from myself my master passion — I had too much reason to know it. I had reason also to know her to be a person of quick and searching shrewdness. Could it then have been a total secret from her, even before she married me? And, knowing or suspecting it, could she have ever loved me? And then, the distracting enquiry, if she loved me not, why the plague did she marry me?

In this state of mind, having determined to make myself utterly miserable, I had not rightly determined how to set about it, when I obtained the assistance of a neighbouring lady. She wrought not her mischief in the ordinary vocation of her sex — she was not a coquette; nor was she of an age to do any mischief at first sight. She was not malicious, like some, nor jealous, like most. But yet she was one of a tolerably large class of mischievous persons. She was one of those who, from the most amiable desire to be agreeable and useful in the world, make all people's affairs their own; who delight in getting hold of a story, and usually get hold of it by its wrong in preference to its right end; then benevolently impart their hold of this wrong end to the very person whose happiness is the most likely to be involved in the distinction between the right and the wrong; and have accordingly often to lament the having become the "innocent cause" of some sad piece of work. She was a gossip. This was her only folly — a great one. My much greater was the eagerly accepting from her that fruit of knowledge which it was the first vice of greedy man to devour, upon the offer of communicative woman.

I would not that he who loves his wealth should gamble with sharpers, nor that he who values his life should drink with bravoes. But with a far deeper dread let the suspicious man eschew all converse with a well-meaning gossip!

This lady, from a desire to set me on yet better terms with my wife, was kind enough to hint that Lady Anne had, for my sake, refused an alliance with a younger and a richer man than myself. The name only, from motives of delicacy, she postponed. And thus, though her love of imparting all was quite as strong as mine of hearing all she could impart, was I kept feeding, unsatisfied still, and my hunger increasing, on the stimulating food of vague and incomplete information. At length, after extorting the strictest promises of secrecy, she confessed that my unsuccessful rival was Sir Felix ——. That he had proposed soon after I had been accepted; that he had been rejected, but not with severity; that, on the contrary, as Lady Anne considered his proposal a strictly honourable one, she had allowed him afterwards to write to her; that she had, in her turn, behaved with a most commendable discretion, for that, to prevent any unpleasant feeling between us, she always retired from company to read his letters; that the difficulty which, up to the last moment, she had to struggle with from his importunities, was shown by her having, early on the very morning of her marriage, given him a letter, which he kissed; and not only it, but the hand which gave it; and that she was not insensible to the pain it had been her duty to inflict; for that she at the same time wiped a tear from her eye with the very handkerchief which, an hour after, performed the same office at the altar. "I do not repeat a word that I cannot swear to," added my kind informant; "all these particulars I had from my own maid, who is cousin to Sir Felix's groom's wife, who lives in Sir Felix's own house." Horror upon horror! I gave full belief to a gossip, a groom, and a groom's wife, and her cousin, who was the gossip's own maid; and then entered judgment on the whole, first against the affection, and then against the honour, of my wife!

To bring to open proof what is unproveable, because untrue, is a very desperate undertaking, though in the affairs of life a very ordinary one; and, in the eagerness of this pursuit, I quite forgot that my success would be my shame. But, though I failed of the proof, I ensured the dishonour. I assumed different disguises, in which I daily watched Lady Anne. I wrote her anonymous letters, in the style in which I fancied Sir Felix might address her. I hid myself, to observe the effect they would produce. I have seen her countenance mark surprise and anger, as she committed them, half perused, to the flames. I have seen her weep, when, as she believed, she was alone; and still I deemed that her tears were faithless to my honour and her own, and that, if amid those tears she thought of me, it was only that she wept over my vigilance which deprived her of the society of her lover. Do not detest me, reader, more than is my due. I felt my own baseness to the quick. My conscience told me I deserved her hate, and assured me that I had obtained it. Yet I went on. Our home was no happy one; and she never dissembled her readiness to meet my proposal to her to live more in the crowd and bustle of the world. This proposal of mine was in the hope of throwing her into habits of unguardedness; her quick concurrence in it I attributed to the hope, in her, of more frequent occasions of meeting Sir Felix. I saw them meet, with demonstrations of a pleasure which they never strove to hide. Often would she quit my arm for his, and sometimes (I still think) an indifferent person might have traced in their manner the appearance of something like an intelligence between them to which I was not a party. I ask not for sympathy: but, still, if there be a state of human suffering singly more exquisite than all the rest under which unhappy man may writhe, it is when a jealous heart sees the object of its pride occupied in ministering to the affections or vanities of another. I have said I was incapable of love. I sometimes doubt it. I know that I have been the prey of jealousy; — and whether the one can exist without the other I leave to such metaphysicians as may think that question a profitable one to discuss.

I was subject to nervous attacks. One evening I was particularly indisposed. I complained of feverishness and thirst. Lady Anne had promised to spend an hour or two from home with a sick friend; but she wished to excuse herself and stay with me. I peevishly refused to permit her to defer the engagement. I thought her concern for me affected; and it disgusted and angered me. At length, when, by my command, she left me, she placed on the table by my elbow a jug of lemonade. Shortly after her departure I took a large draught of it; — my thirst and restlessness encreasing, I returned to my jug. I was seized with giddiness and vomiting. Oh, was it possible! — Yes! Such things have been! The horrid thought struck me that aversion and revenge had done their work, — that I was poisoned, — and by my own wife! I rang the bell violently, — communicated to all my servants the strong probability of their mistress being an assassin, and sent off three of them instantly in different directions: one for a police officer, one for Doctor ——, and one for a stomach-pump.

Lady Anne returned in the midst of the scene that ensued, having shortened her visit to attend on me. The stomach-pump had just done its work in its own rough and summary way; and the doctor was, by my particular desire, engaged in an active chemical analysis of the proceeds. I was sitting in great anxiety to hear by what preparation of vegetable or mineral mischief my life had been attempted. No trace of poison could the doctor find in what had been made to rise in judgment; and now did he endeavour to calm me into admitting the persuasion that it was only the excitement of the mind acting upon those sensitive sympathizers in all the mental distresses of man, the biliary organs. Pooh! — And was it thus I was to be defrauded of my hopes of proving myself a murdered man? I had never, for a moment, lost sight of the vessel that contained the residue of the lemonade. I now desired the doctor to transfer his attention to the jug, and promised him that he would discover a deposit of arsenick at the bottom. My wife had hitherto sat, not an unmoved, but a resolute and indignant, spectatress of all this strange performance. At this moment, she seized, with a strong and sudden effort, the jug, which was already in the doctor's hands. I thought she would dash it to the ground, and shrieked out to all to rescue it from her grasp; — but, she had swallowed every drop that remained! She quietly and silently resumed her seat! What could I think? At one moment, conscience told me I had wronged her, and immortalised the proofs of my madness before competent witnesses; but, at the next, I concluded that the certainty of detection and punishment had impelled her to the horrible resolution of adding suicide to an attempt at murder. Surprise, anxiety, and the exhaustion of the mechanical process my stomach had undergone, had made me incapable of exertion. My situation was deplorable. The doctor departed, shrugging his shoulders; my servants with difficulty smothered their laughter; and my wife sat bolt upright, and neither sickened nor swelled. A fearful languor stole over my senses. I thought I was dying. I remember no more. It seems a deep sleep came over me, and I was carried to bed.

Late next day I awoke to a full sense of all that had passed, together with a confounding consciousness of perfect health. I intended to sneak out of the house unobserved, but, on my opening my door, I was presented with a letter.

It was from Lady Anne. In a tone of remonstrance so dignified and so deserved that it left me without a word or a thought in my defence, she told me that we now must part, — not for her character's sake only, but for my own repose. She left the choice of her place of retirement to me. She said she had quitted my house as soon as the disgraceful scene of the former night had closed, and had gone to that of her sick friend, where she should remain until I should have determined on her future plans, but declared that nothing could induce her ever again to see a husband who had so cruelly repaid her blameless conduct. She ended with an earnest, an affectionate, prayer for me, to strive, for my own happiness and credit, to conquer my most unhappy fault, which had led to such an insult as alone could have driven her from my side.

I was abashed. But, before I could believe her thoroughly in the right, I resolved to have *one* more peep. I shall surprise the reader when I say that now I *really* saw the eternal Sir Felix go stealthily to the house of Lady Anne's sick friend. I saw him let in and out with every sign of caution. He used to go there, unattended, and generally at twilight, wrapped in one of those hideous cloaks which have lately been introduced into fashion, with many other filthy serenading habits from foreign parts. Was I now justified in fearing that all was not quite right? I felt certain that all was quite wrong; and I only waited for the chance of such a disclosure as might effectually rid me of the shackles and dangers of the marriage bond. These hopes were delayed by the departure of Lady Anne from London. She had, through her lawyer, repeatedly urged me to choose a residence for her; but, in furtherance of my project, I had left these applications without a reply. I thought I had every reason to resent the step she had now taken. In my phrenzy I protested against her having moved without my knowledge and permission. But, where was

Sir Felix? He had gone abroad. Now all was clear to me. While he was in London, Lady Anne had been content to remain with her friend; and it was upon his quitting England, tired no doubt of her and of her affection, that she had taken the sudden resolution of leaving a town which had ceased to contain her lover, and that did contain her husband. She was now, where, unmolested, she could mourn over his absence and his inconstancy!

For myself — I was again alone in the world. My years, my infirmities, increasing. I began too to perceive, with a sensitiveness which a disposition like mine was calculated to sharpen, that the world, after having at first made some show in my favour, had now withdrawn its sympathy; and that many a tale of my forepast follies was rising again in judgment, much to my disparagement in my present condition. I had no immediate hopes of the success of my favourite scheme; for month after month elapsed, and it appeared as though Sir Felix had resolved to return no more. To shake, if possible, this resolution of his, now so fatal to my hopes, and to deceive Lady Anne into a false security, I feigned preparations for going abroad, and put my departure in the papers. But I quitted not London: I changed my way of life; and, taking lodgings in the healthy and retired neighbourhood of the Edgeware Road, I there concealed myself under a feigned name and the assumed character of a bachelor. My landlady, who represented herself as an officer's widow, a conversable and comely body, soon became to me a woman after my own heart. She would make my tea, and render my evenings agreeable with stories of her departed husband. She confessed over our cups that she had not lived happily with him; and she assured me of her determination never again to marry. She was the first single woman I had ever known who I was quite sure had no designs, however remote, upon my person; for she thought me poor. I used, for several days together, to leave my lodgings, without any account of my actions being given or required. Thus I had, at last, discovered a manner of woman, and of life, which suited me. In one of my old disguises, I used to prowl about the neighbourhood of the cottage that contained my unhappy wife. I used, unobserved, to see her frequently. Ever alone — ever melancholy — and sinking under a decay of health and beauty which I am willing to hope might have awakened tenderness, even in me, had I not attributed it, wretch as I was, to any but the innocent and virtuous grief that was consuming her.

Yet this life was idle and uneventful. And an idle and uneventful life leaves a man's head and heart open to strange fancies. It left me, now, in my age, and for the first time, to fancy myself in love. Can the reader doubt with whom? If he does, he has never lived in single gentleman's lodgings, with a comely communicative landlady, who makes his tea, who flatters his vanity by confiding to him her causes of discontent with her departed husband, and lulls his suspicions by imparting her determination to marry no more. I laid the whole plan of the drama. Lady Anne's part of the performance I considered nearly as good as settled. I should obtain my divorce. My widow would be kind, when, assisted by the charms of my strong box, (les beaux yeux de ma cassette,) I should open it and my heart to her together. Fortune, too, seemed at length to favour the completion of my design; for I read in the papers of Sir Felix's return.

I had but one doubt which hung behind to perplex me. Would my widow, would any woman, be tender and true enough to cleave to me still, when, by accident, or illness, as I should decline in years, I might become incapable of acting profitably for myself? Judging by her tenderness to a sickly, stupid, abusive, superannuated, parrot, whom she cherished, she was capable, I thought, of constant, disinterested, love. But I determined on a trial. I resolved to sham illness, and to watch her use of the brief authority with which I should thus be able to invest her. The very next night, I rang her up from her bed. My usual spare and anxious countenance, aided in its lamentable expression by a night-cap well arranged to assist the deception, and by a beard which had been purposely neglected, was not at variance with my story. She proposed a doctor. No, said I; doctors were expensive, and I was an old man, and might, I hoped, be allowed to die in peace, my own way. She exerted her own small knowledge of medicine in my behalf. I took all she gave me, the better to colour my design. I acted the part of a sick man; not to the life only, I proceeded to act it to the death. Her behaviour had been charming for several days — all attention, all kindness. And I now only wished to satisfy myself if she would show a little, a very little, sorrow, at the advances of my dissolution. I was just proceeding prosperously to the last scene, when she went out for an instant, as she said, to speak with a person on business. She had left the door ajar between the rooms, and I could distinctly hear her as she discoursed with a gruff-voiced man, to the following effect: —

Man. Well, mistress, is the old gentleman ready?

Landlady. Not quite, Jem; you must come back in the evening.

Man. That's unpossible. I have to go beyond Whitechapel for an old lady who must be pretty well dead by this time; and I've got a sack here will hold 'em both.

Landlady. Well, I don't know; he must be nigh gone by now; and it's dangerous to keep such things long in an honest lodging, now the cry is up about them. Remember, I must have half what's given. If you should do me out of a penny, I'll split — so, come, give us the sack.

To spring out from my death-bed, on the floor, with a yell of "murder!" — to fling the door to, and bolt it on the inside, was the affair of a moment, rendered short, vigourous, and decisive, by despair. Chairs, tables, every article of the furniture of a sick-room, did I pile up, in miraculous haste, to form a barrier sufficient to keep the dæmons who were on the outside in check, while I might by my cries from the window invite the neighbourhood and passengers to witness my danger and defend my life. But, superfluous were these precautions. With a clatter louder than that which I occasioned by throwing up my fortifications within, and with a yell which for a moment deafened me to my own cry of "murder," did the wretches tumble over each other all the way down stairs. Then, out of the street door they rushed, together, and, turning the corner, disappeared. My head already half out of the window, I paused to reflect upon my condition. If I should alarm the neighbourhood, my landlady would doubtless retaliate upon me my accusation with a counter-charge of insanity. And too many things would concur to give colour to such an imputation; even, perhaps, to the placing me in a mad-house for life. I therefore thought my wisest course to be the one which I adopted in perfect silence. I dressed, and, having merely armed myself with a poker against the possibility of my assailants returning in force before I should be able to descend the stairs, and leaving without reluctance behind me every part of that small stock of property which I had with me in my lodgings, I made my escape, bidding a hasty and a last farewell to the house which had so nearly witnessed the closing scene to my unhappy life. Often since have I shuddered as I passed that house, though now inhabited, I believe, by very respectable and honest people. The dæmon in widow's shape I have never since set eyes on; nor do I ever wish it.

The rest of my story is shortly told. This paragraph appeared in the papers: — "The gallant Sir Felix ——, who is just returned from the Continent, has announced his marriage with the accomplished Miss D——, which took place two years ago, under circumstances which made it necessary that it should not sooner be publickly declared."

When I say that Miss D—— was the earliest of Lady Anne's friends, the mystery of all that poisoned the happiness of my married life is solved. In obedience to the gossip's stipulation, I had never had the frankness to ask my wife concerning her position with Sir Felix. It was on her friend's account alone she had ever communicated with him. Before her marriage, she had been trusted by them, and had suffered their letters to pass through her hands; and, on the morning of her marriage, she had formally resigned that trust. When she claimed an asylum in the house of her friend, that friend had already for some time been Sir Felix's wife.

There is one concluding part of my narrative, which my readers will not have expected. Lady Anne is reconciled to me; but, as the condition, the only one, of her forgiveness, she has insisted on my committing my memorials to paper, as holding up to me a beacon to warn me hereafter from those dangers on which so often, in former times, the whole freight of my happiness has made wreck. Now that I have completed my task, it is against her wish that I publish it. But here she must be disobeyed. If it be the record of my own disgrace, it is no less that of her many virtues. As such it shall go forth into the world.

There is one more act of justice which, alas! I cannot perform. It is to confess to my poor brother that the maxim of his simplicity was as wise as it was amiable. This though his death has prevented, I have adopted his maxim with his children, and, together with them, make it my own; and thus, as it were, I inscribe it to his memory as the moral of my tale: — "On the whole, a greater share of happiness belongs to one, who, from thinking a little too well of the world, is sometimes deceived, than to one, who, from thinking a great deal too ill of the world, has through life to eat the bread of carefulness, seasoned with this bitter experience, that, in a pitched battle between a sly man and sly mankind, the odds are always awefully against the contentious unit."

L. G.

THE SHOOTING STAR.

It was my meaning to return, late as it was, across the bog, over by "Phelim's Rest," and so reach home before my mother would wake.

And what was "Phelim's Rest," and who was I, and my mother at home and alone, and I out still, and it so late? And is there another bog in the whole south, be it where it may, from Wexford, and the Golden Vale of Kilkenny, to the westermost extremity of Ireland and Europe entirely, that it wouldn't be better crossing on a dark November's night, than exactly that which lay convenient to my poor mother's bit of a farm? And "Phelim's Rest," in the middle of it, had been, many's the long day since, the strong place of some old chieftain, (or worse may be,) where he used to hold himself secure from all comers, save and except them he'd like, by reason there was only one path, none of the widest, and not much of a path neither, leading from the " Rest," both ways out to the edge of the bog.

The path was crooked, and broken, with big stones, here and there, a sort of causeway like; and you'd sometimes seem to yourself to be rather going backward than forward, seeing the turns of it; and each side brown shaking bog, and big holes of water; and worse luck's his who would get into them. It 's my opinion that, in his day, and before the stone causeway was there, it was all brown together, only patches of green or of water, and that none but he and his men would know the firm ground at all to go across. And the " Rest " is but a small little place, on which once stood a grand tower, or such as that, the old stone wall of which still is in parts five or six feet above the heap, and on one side a little gable for his bell; and the stones of the upper part of the tower, such as hadn't gone to make the causeway, had tumbled round the foot, and made it almost a sort of island of natural rock to look at, standing up grey in the dark and watery flat.

And there it was, as a boy, I'd be mightily given to sit of a morning, and through the day too, and a good bit of the evening, by reason it was the shortest way to the town, when I'd go for my mother of an errand. And there I'd lie in the sun on the stones and soft moss, or sit dabbling my heels in the square pools that the turf-cutters made, with my bit of whatever it was that I'd eat; and I'd glory in a throw at the wild fowl, who'd come (bold birds as they were) to quarrel with me for my seat and my bit: and it was by my staying out so late, (and because, when the water lay high on the bog, and the evenings were dark and dirty, it was not always a sure thing by any manner of means to find the path rightly,) that my poor mother would be uneasy; and, sometimes, when I'd come home wet and cold, she'd be very mad with me, poor soul! God rest her! for she loved me greatly. And often, when she'd fault me for leaving her to go sit alone among the stones and the wild birds, she'd talk of my father, who had left her alone with me in the world, and she'd cry over me, graceless as I was. For I was the only son of my mother, and she was a widow! Oh, my poor mother! and I loved you too! And I believe at times you knew it! And, oh, that I had you but with me now, old as you would be, and helpless, but for me, and all the dearer too for that, and I would tell you that indeed indeed I loved you all along, and that your care of me should never make a sore heart between us again; and I'd never cause you uneasiness, but sit by you, and comfort and cherish you. But that is past and gone now!

Well, and I grew up to be a clean proper fellow, and it was my own birth-day, and there was a wedding in the town, and I wished greatly to be there, and my poor mother knew it right well; and, the why I did not know, but she was more than ever eager with me that night to stay with her, though I told her I would pass my birth-day night with her until she'd be going to bed; but that the boys would be wanting me at the town, and that there'd be grand doings long after that. And true for me it was: the bridegroom had been, many's the day, my fishing companion, and, besides, the bride's mother was her own gossip, and the piper was her own foster-brother; and,—why wouldn't she let me go? And there was Anty Dooley too,—and I knew she'd be there, the creature,—and I'd be making sweet eyes at Anty. But it was all one. My poor mother, besides a wish expressed, faintly and mildly enough, when she went to bed, left her command and her blessing on me that I wouldn't go.

But how could my going hurt my poor mother? So I sees her to bed, and the light well out, and off I slinks out of the window, not to be heard, like a bold undutiful blackguard, and across the bog, by the sweet moon, meaning to be back before my mother was up. Well, all this was very well; and, though the rains had made the water lie high in places on the turf, and over some parts of the causeway too, I knew the track, and the sky was bright altogether; and I spent my hour or two just as I'd wish, and no much harm neither; only I was disobeying and deceiving my poor mother.

It was a good two in the morning when I put forward to come back. Alone I was; for nobody's way but mine lay over the bog.

The morning had set in cloudy and dark, and not a blink in the whole heavens, but a small rain in my face; and I was thinking more of Anty than should be, seeing the danger was all before me, and nothing to be discerned at the nose's length of me, any more than if I had been stark natural blind. I missed the track that led to the causeway. Young I was; and, because nothing could hurt the like of me, I pushed on over the quaking scraw-lugger, thinking, sure enough, I'd, by and bye, come to the hard.

Every step took me deeper and deeper into the mischief, and out of my knowledge, and among appearances new and strange to me; I was bothered among bog holes, I tumbled over turf-clumps, till at last all grew soft, and it was enough for me to keep this side smothering depth, by reason, I was fairly bogged. I sunk if I stood still; I was more lost if I tried to get on: I knew no more than the dead where I was, or how to return. My limbs ached with the labour, and I cried piteously. The wind blustered and howled mournfully round me; the green plovers, blown from the roosts, were borne before it off their wings, gibbering and squeaking across the very face of me; and the black clouds were driving, as it seemed to me, close over my head. A few moments more, and I was throat-deep in water.

I thought of my mother!—of her strong love for me, (and a mischief on me,) and the many proofs I'd be daily receiving of it; I knew her agony if I'd never return, or be again heard of,—and, oh! I hated myself, and was in despair. I looked wildly up to heaven, and prayed: "Oh Lord, I am a sinner! But my mother, my poor mother!" I paused, holding on by my hands to the edge of the hole where I was; and my heart beat quick and strong; for it seemed a small spot grew suddenly light in the vast black heavens, and a shooting star darted across; and oh! its ever blessed gleam lighted up for a moment one big white stone, which I could not mistake; it was not above twenty good paces from me. I struggled towards it; the ground grew firmer: long life to it!—it was one of the causeway, and I reached "Phelim's Rest!" But the clouds were as dark again as ever! and here I could sit till first day-dawn, two, three, cold wretched hours, giving God thanks; but my heart breaking to think if my mother would wake and call me.

I reached home, oh! strongly hoping that she had been spared all. But I was soon sensible that the house-door was open, and a light in the bit of a kitchen. I saw through the window my mother up and drest, sure enough, and boiling the milk, at that unseasonable hour, and a suit of my clothes warming at the fire. She was very pale. Her eye was often turned towards the door, and then upwards; and then she'd droop her head again, and turn my clothes, and clasp her hands for me. Hard enough it was to bear to see that! I was soon with my arms round her neck: "My child — my pet — my darling ——:" she paused, "be comforted, all's right now — I've been very anxious — I guessed where you were, and how it would be; it was very dark for you, and, helpless as I am, I had once the thought to go out to you; but I did a better part, — I prayed; — for without Him there is no help, and with

Him there is no danger. I watched at the door till near three, and the wind blew cold upon my heart, and I could see nothing, and hear nothing, but the blast and dashing rain. And it was that night, sixteen years ago, you first drew breath, and God knows how it might then be with you. I knelt on the ground in my agony, and said, "Lord, who gavest him life, spare him, and he will be thy servant!" Oh, my boy, I am not presumptuous; but just then a bright shooting star streamed across, and it almost seemed to tell me that there was hope, and that heaven was not shut to my prayers, or to my child!"

I'll not take it on me to say whether myself grew better or wiser for that, but I am sure I ought to; or whether I was more dutiful to my mother: alas! I hope so;—for a sadder night it was mine to see within three years after. But *that* night her son never can describe,—no, nor think of,—except to my own self.

Shortly after my poor mother's death, I had offers from a commercial house in Cork, to which my father had been well known; and, before the year came round, it was determined to send me out on business to their correspondents at Lisbon. I took my passage in a small merchant brig that had been built for privateering on the Spanish main, going out in ballast, ill appointed enough, and mighty short-handed — the captain, three men, and a boy, over and above myself. But what of that? Fresh to the world, and, moreover, proud, to be sure, and thinking greatly of what I'd got on hand, and I so young: what could a wild Irish boy feel but a bounding heart, on the bold wide ocean for the first time?

I set to work to take my place in the ship. I took my watch, and went aloft, and kept a dead reckoning, and took daily a bit of an observation, too, for my own self. Well; all went mighty well, and we made the rock, and were well off the Tagus before sun-down on the fourteenth day. The wind being fair, and plenty of it, the captain was anxious to save his tide up that night; but not knowing the river, and wanting a pilot in, we bore up to a sail that was coming close-hauled from the southward, and apparently standing in.

The stranger, a Portuguese ship, heavy laden, seemed not to like our cut, and went about, carrying on, and putting herself before the wind. Well, we knew we could go two to her one; and it was taking us mighty little out of our course, and we could not get in without a pilot at any rate, and so we only luffed a point or two, not to fall to leeward of our chase, and, hand-over-hand, we were coming up with her.

In less than two hours, we were within hail; and so near in with the land, too, and it being a shoal coast, and the wind coming strong from the north-west, and it growing very dark, it was only having her — and a large ship she was too — within us, that gave us confidence to stand on. Suddenly she luffed up, nearly across our bows, as if going about; but she merely braced her head-yards round, then took in top-gallant sails, and, keeping her main-top sail back to the mast, lay at our mercy.

We hailed her as we passed ; but no answer we got but a dead silence. So, bringing the brig up in the wind as soon as we could, to heave her to, convenient to the Portuguee, we held a council what was to be done. We had but one boat, and she was on deck, and a nasty, little, round, short, crazy, jolly-boat she was as you'd wish to see. So we lowered her; and, by reason we were short-handed, and it blowing strong, the captain wouldn't spare only a man, and the small boy, and me, that wasn't good for much. So, shoving off, I steered for the Portuguee, whom we could now see but mighty little of, for the distance had encreased greatly between the two vessels since we first hove to.

Well; we had got a musket in the bottom of the boat, for a signal in case of accident, and then the brig was to hoist a light. By the time we had pulled fairly out of sight of her, and the night now pitch dark, it was our opinion we could not catch a wink of the other, and it was a bare chance where she might be. Then, for the first time, spoke the small boy. " And, may be," said he, " the Portuguee guessed we were lowering away our boat, and thinking, after we had shoved off, that the captain, with his boat adrift, could hardly do less than wait to pick her up: may be the Portuguee has made sail again." And faith this sounded reasonable too. And, furthermore, and besides that, it being at least beyond our knowledge where the Portuguee was, we thought we might as well pull back.

At this time, I felt the cold greatly about the legs of me, and, putting my hand down, oh, murder! if the boat wasn't half way up to the thwarts in water. " Why, what on earth is this?" cried I. " May be," says the small boy, " your honour, and the captain, and Pat, and Flinn, and myself, and Ben, that's here, forgot to ship the plug, and may be it's out." And sure enough it was. And, because I was sensible of a hole as big as my thumb through the boat's bottom, it stood to reason that she should be filling. " Short times for thinking," said I; " it's my opinion it's a good season for making a bit of a signal." But, worse and worse, there was the musket where we'd put it, over head and ears, lock and all, poor thing, in good blue water on the boat's floor.

Nothing remained but to pull for the bare life; — and what if I'd bale with my hat? — and, may be, they 'll be thinking on board something's wrong, and they'll show a light, and then," says I, " I'll see them." Well, by the very reason of the boat's pulling heavy, and a swell, and Ben catching a crab, too, crack goes the grummet his oar pulled against, short off in the mortice; and there we were, one oar, and we spinning round, and filling, and nothing else!

Now, to be sure, all seemed as good as over with us at any rate. And is there any one, with only nineteen years upon him, with death, inevitable, imminent, death, staring him in the face, every moment nearer, and more grim, but would feel it hard to have lived to be thus lost in his youth, with all his hopes before him? So thought the poor small boy in the bows; for he wept aloud, and called on his mother. Poor boy! she was far away. But had nobody a mother but he? Oh, yes! Though mine was dead and gone, she'd be with me still: often in my joy, when I'd wish for her to share it; and always in pain or sorrow; for they were akin to the thoughts of having lost her. And, oh! that night, when I was alone on the wide, tumbling, unrelenting, swell, in a round, short, crazy, jolly-boat, with one oar, and no plug to bless ourselves, and two poor wretches whose company would be no comfort in drowning; and the more I baled, the more I could n't keep her from filling. It was just that night twelvemonth — but why did I remember it was just a year ago that night that I lost her, when I thought, to be sure, we were so soon to meet again? Oh, it was that I was thankful she was dead and gone, not to mourn for me. But I said nothing; for I wouldn't have considered that handsome, by any means, to the rest of us; but I looked once round before I'd give all up.

Was that the brig's light? — oh no! it was a shooting star! — and I don't know what it was, or why, but I felt something glance warm across my heart. It was but a foolish shooting star, after all; — but I set the spot where it fell. And, hurrah! if Ben, who had been working all along with his knife, like a heathen who never thought of death, hadn't got the mortice-hole clear, and new shipped the grummet. So we cheered to keep our hearts up, — and got something like steerage-way on the boat once more. But, seeing it was all one which way we put her head, I steered her a straight course for where the star had shot into the wave, — I don't know why, — and baled double tides. And, poor comfort though this was, I thought I 'd see what would come of it, and hurrahed them to give way stoutly, for we might, at least, be pulling in towards shore.

Two dreary hours more, and still working hard, when a streak of grey morning light began to dawn narrow and cheerless on the horizon. Was it cheerless, I said? Oh no — blessings on it! for as the dark curtain drew up, which for hours had been closed on the very souls of us, I thought I could see a sail on the black heaving horizon, against the opening sky, right a-head. My eyes ached, being fixed so long; I closed them for a wink, — and then, clear and plain, there was the brig, hove to as we had left her, and not a lantern had the thief shown all the time. Well; we cheered again, loud and lustily. And now it was, indeed, I wept amain; and the poor boy shrieked like a young thing catching a sight of life again. Even Ben, the creature, dropped his head, as if he felt more than he'd be speaking of.

It was long, long before we could be seen pulling over the swell, though often I'd wave my handkerchief high. But, at last,—oh glory!—we saw her fill her sails and come right down to us. And she picked us up just as the jolly-boat's ugly gunnel was down to the water's edge.

And here I am, five years after. I have led a rough life since, and am like to do,—for I'm captain's clerk to a West Indiaman. But never, never from that hour have I seen a shooting star but I'm the better for it; for then I bless heaven for my life, and my poor mother for her prayer, when I was struggling in the bog-hole near "Phelim's Rest."

Am I superstitious?—I believe not.

G.

THE FIRST FIT OF THE GOUT,

THE END OF MAN'S HAPPINESS.

A JOURNAL.

Oh gout! inexorable wicked gout! bane of all enjoyment! destroyer of beauty, of comfort, of activity, of grace! of amusement of every kind, and in every degree! leveller of distinctions — that makest the pampered rich man to suffer and lament like the subdued mechanick, and the subdued mechanick to swear and bluster like the pampered rich man! — that swellest the toe of the nimble rope-dancer till he limp it like a one-legged Chelsea pensioner! — oh, what have I done to deserve thy heavy chastenings, and all the cruel mortifications thou hast brought upon me in thy train?

But I will stay my suspirations, for they do but accelerate the circulation of my blood; and then my toe, and my knee, and my hip, and my elbow — seats of my disorder — resume their insufferable twitchings, making existence horrible, and me a very wretch indeed — consigning me again to hot flannels, old women, apothecaries, and water gruel.

It is a toil too great for a man, recovering as slowly as possible, (my friends call it "favourably and gradually,") from a first, and a very severe, fit of the gout, to give a detail " raisonné" of all his sufferings. I have forgotten many of mine; I have been delirious with vexation, even more than with pain. For I have been till now a smart man, — and a handsome man; a man famous for a light dancing step in walking, and a small foot, and a well-made shoe; and it has been my study to prolong my youth, and guard my good looks, by every possible little attention to my person and manners; by feats of agility, such as twisting through chair-backs, standing on one foot, and raising the other to my mouth, falling flat on the ground, as people do in a tragedy, or, still better, in a pantomime, and getting up again without using my hands; by quadrilling it, like a thing of one-and-twenty; and, in short, by every innocent artifice that might cheat the world into believing I was younger by fifteen good years than I am now free to own, and eager to own, I am; for, now, my only prospect of future ease and comfort is in running into the opposite extreme, and in being able, by reason of my infirmities, to claim the best and most commodious arm-chair, the stoutest walking-stick, the bed-room on the ground-floor, with the pity and the indulgence of those who will be as kind as they are active, and who will run my messages, rub my foot, ring the bell, and bring me relays of caricatures.— Thank God there is no lack of excellent caricatures just now,—which will bear looking at again and again. May H. B. live for ever! and never have the gout in his pictorial hand or his inventive head!

I fear "self" has always occupied too much of my thoughts; and now it is "gouty self," still less social, and still more selfish, in its enjoyments than ever. But I can dwell on nothing else for longer than a few minutes at a time. I am a poor enervated creature, and I must try at least to make my complainings heard by the sympathising fraternity of the podagrous, if no other race of men will compassionate me, listen to me, or read me.

I have had some small, very small, solace in my misery by keeping a sort of sick-room journal. I am still incapable of connecting these snatches of writing into a detailed account of the progress of a fit of gout; but I think they may, like my poor toe, be more interesting in their present shape. The world loves originality, too; and I am sure the subject will strike more home to the probable majority of my readers (those, I mean, who are sufferers from gout) than if I affected a tranquil style of writing, while a prey to the most painful of all the pains that flesh is heir to.

But I must first shortly introduce myself to notice. My wife, — yes, the truth must out, spite of all my assumed bachelor airs, — I have a wife; and, now that I have the gout likewise, I would not be without her for the world. What can place a flannel, and smooth a pillow, and sweeten a bitter draught (I do not speak in types), or alleviate a pang of corporal sufferance, like the soft, light, cautious, ready, willing, hand of an affectionate wife? Yes, I have a wife, and a happy home, and six small children, all healthy and beautiful, and many friends, old and tried; and yet I have sometimes left all, and neglected all, and been half ashamed of all, and have even denied that I possessed some of these blessings; and for what? — that I might the better affect the externals of youth to hide the real respectability of my station, while I might play the boy, and the lover, and the fool, with every pretty woman with whom I happened to become acquainted.

But let me say one redeeming word for myself—I loved my wife. Yes. Although I left her under feigned excuses; though I kept her a stranger to my habits, my pursuits, my amusements; though I withheld from her my confidence in some matters the most important to a loving wife, and now and then went so far as to impose upon her credulous, unsuspecting, affection,—still I loved her, and admired her, and honoured her; and, had I, at any moment since our marriage, (even before the gout had brought me low and lean,) had to choose again my life's companion and my honour's guardian, again should I, without a moment's hesitation, have chosen thee, my good and faithful Janet.

But I am exhausted with even this small effort of tenderness, and must now refer my readers to my journal:—"Sweet Janet, give me a cordial, and fifteen drops of my new bitters, and reach me that little port-folio by the bedside, in which I wrote when I was so poorly; tie the bell-string to my chair; put the smelling-bottle within my reach, and tell them not to bang the doors. Now, go and take a walk, for you are pale for want of air, and I will amuse myself with these."

Wednesday. — Cross and ill — out of condition — don't know what is the matter with me — never felt so before — haven't been to say well for several days — can't keep my shoe on, right foot so uneasy — a pain in the sole of it all through to the instep — must be the cramp.

Seven o'clock. — Getting worse — no relish for any thing — forced to wear my slippers and stay at home — can't eat — children make a sad noise over my head — will smoke a cigar and drink some champagne — shall then be up to going to the play — can go there in large shoes and trowsers.

Ten o'clock. — It won't do — devil take the cigar and the champagne! — send for a doctor — my foot's on fire! — a red-hot poker running through it!

Monday. — Thursday ,Friday, Saturday, and Sunday! shall I ever forget ye? I have had the gout! am a martyr to the gout! Oh, what excruciating torture! Did I ever feel pain before? Never! I wonder I'm alive — I am but half alive, and writing makes me giddy.

Wednesday. — Another whole day of agonising pain. A little better now, — a very little, — and only the effect of opium, so it will not last. But, thank heaven! I have a moment of comparative ease from the racking pains of gout! Could it have been gout? — Yes, it was gout. I have had it all over me — nobody ever before was so afflicted — I am vanquished, utterly vanquished — I cry like a child, and gossip over my sufferings like an old woman who has a pride in her incapacity. Pity — pity is all I covet — I am so exhausted — so feeble!

Thursday. — A sad night — got an hour's sleep this morning, which has revived me a little — am a little better — and should have felt some degree of encouragement, but for an untoward accident, which has annoyed me beyond measure, and given me a return of my feverish symptoms — must not think any more about it to-day — my doctor says I must be quiet, and composed. To-morrow I may be better.

Friday. — Better indeed! — worse and worse! Could not sleep a wink. Shall I never be at rest? oh my toe! and oh these tiresome women! Can't they be quiet when a man has got the gout — and can't they wait till he's well, and hold their tongues and their pens meanwhile? D—n these women! — No, I won't say that though. — Bless them. — But what shall I do? I am prettily shown up now! Unable to move hand or foot, — helpless as a baby, and a cypher in my own house, — dosing my life away, and fit for nothing, — of course every matter of business is referred to my wife. Yesterday half a dozen notes, directed to me, were given to her by my rascal of a groom. He might have known better. I believe he had a pleasure in showing me up, because I was so snappish with him, when this plaguey gout was coming on, only because young Highflyer's coat stared.—Yes, he gave half a dozen notes to my wife, of half a dozen different colours, and with half a dozen pretty devices on the seals. She might have guessed they had nothing to do with her. She could not have understood them — how should she? Here they are; true copies:—

Note 1. (Pink paper.)

" Don't forget you are engaged to-night for our quadrille costumée. Your dress, — white shirt, &c., pink and blue bows ; straw hat, with wreath of corn flowers; red stockings; green garters below the knee, and *very* small yellow morocco leather shoes. Don't be late. We must have a rehearsal before our grand début. CHARLOTTE."

Note 2. (Blue.)

" Where are you, Tesoro? won't your *wife* allow you to go out? You see I have found out you *have a* wife! EMILY."

Note 3. (Green.)

"Mr. A. is become rather more reasonable — I am to have an opera-box for the whole season. Oh! the transport of having my bijou by my side every Tuesday and Saturday! — But where are you? Rosamond."

Note 4. (Yellow.)

"We are waiting for you — all the other rowers are come, and look very tidy in their blue striped shirts and no neckcloths. — It won't rain *all* day — we are just starting — make haste. Caroline."

Note 5. (Lilack.)

"My amiable friend must forgive me, if I say he is unkind. Above a week — and no visit — no letters — no plaintive sonnet — no little token — intrinsically trifling, but inestimable to friendship! not a rose — a violet — a diamond Sevigné — nor any little thing to prove the thought is present, although the person may be absent. Fickle? — No — I'll not believe it — after all your promises and vows of eternal friendship — no! But, perhaps, your wife is jealous — perhaps she cannot understand the refinements of a pure and tender friendship. What meanness to be jealous! Yes, you are very right to stay away — it is your duty — but I must find a friend with fewer domestick ties. I am too sensitive — they bore me. Adieu for ever! unless you come to-day. X. Y. Z."

Note 6. (Rose-colour, stamped with Cupids.)
" Remember! — SOMEBODY."

Now was it not enough to drive a man mad to see his own wife standing at his bed's foot, with all these six notes open in her hand? But she looked innocent, and ignorant, and tranquil as ever.

Had she read them? I shall never feel sure that she had *not*, and yet, if she *had* — how could she be tranquil? They must have opened her eyes, or her eyes are not worth opening. She can't *like* to have such a fool for her husband! Strange animal that I am, and contradictory!—I should not like to think that my wife *could* read those six notes and not be jealous—and angry—and unhappy. I would not give twopence for her if she *could* be tranquil, and calm, and contented, under what any delicate-minded woman *ought* to consider a misfortune; for, upon my life, these notes paint me worse than I am. I am a Philanderer, and that leads me into follies;—but only follies—and I love my wife in spite of them all, and value her good opinion and affection beyond all other good. But, if she have read those notes, can I expect her to believe it?

"Here are some notes," she said, holding up No. 1. "They seem all to be invitations to parties. Shall I read them to you?"

"For God's sake, no!" I answered, with unbecoming haste, which she mistook, I hope, for gouty peevishness. For I saw by their shapes and colours, that there could be no good in them.

“ They are invitations,” she continued, glancing her eye again over No. 1. “ But I said you have got the gout.”

“ The devil you did ? ” I uttered inadvertently.

She replied with perfect simplicity : — “ Yes, it is the truth, and a very sufficient answer to all invitations at this present. I said, from myself, that you were very ill with a severe fit of the gout — and that you will answer those letters that require an answer as soon as you are better. I will put them on the chimney-piece, with this book upon them, to keep them together ; and, whenever you like it, I will bring pen, ink, and paper, and write the answers to them that you shall dictate.”

No — she could only have read the first ; and she is so accustomed to seeing me make a gander of myself, — she has so often made up a fancy-dress for me with her own hands, and knows I am such a vain frivolous ape, that I begin to think she was not even surprised at No. 1., and had no curiosity to look further than the fortunate quadrille costumée. So, I am better now, and will take a nap; to-morrow, I hope, I shall get into a gouty chair, and a list shoe. I have ordered all coloured notes to be given to me privately. I should have done so sooner. But all's well, I do believe.

Saturday. — No such dissipation for me as a gouty chair and a list shoe yet. A return of pain last night, and fever. It is shifting its quarters, and flying about from joint to joint, till not an inch of me is free from pain. They tell me it is a good sign; and they wish me joy. They say that the gout is dispersing, and will soon take its departure. I am a sad victim to this horrible disease. It has quite subdued me. I, who never kept my bed before for a whole day, now find it is the only comfort in life. The monotony of a sick-room is become so necessary to me, that it is losing all its horrors. Unfit for every other place, it is some relief to me to be a despot here, — to have all arranged as I wish one moment, and to alter all by a sign or a nod the next. Could any thing be less to my present taste, than a smart apartment? — Good heaven! I tremble at the thought of a long dinner; — Sitting bolt upright on a cane-bottomed chair. The idea of a cold damp laborious party of pleasure by water gives me an ague fit. How should I shrink from facing the heat of an opera box! A boudoir all over looking-glasses would add to my misfortunes, by multiplying on all sides the afflicting image of a swollen leg and sallow blotched complexion.

No! — My days of health and sweet folly all are past! — As soon as I *can* move, I will go to my country-house — to Birchendown — where I have not been since my honey-moon — but where I ought to be: I will take to botany — and dendrology — plant young trees —

improve my grounds for my son's sake. Oh! it may soon be his! I will be a magistrate, and take the chair, an easy chair, at quarter sessions.— Little is required for that, but a captious temper and a chronick disorder. I will lead a useful comfortable life at last — never wear tight shoes again. I will drive my own wife about in a little low four-wheeled carriage, drawn by a steady pony. She is ignorant of my misdeeds past, and will still think herself a happy woman, — and, I know, will enjoy the change, and value the constant society of her once careless husband. She deserves of me this sweet amends. I will write to my steward to-morrow.

Sunday. — There is no post of a Sunday — so I can't write to-day — and I never could do things well in a hurry. I slept for several hours last night, and feel somewhat better — although I am very weak, and cannot sit up in my bed. But I am out of pain, and that is a great blessing. I shall get well in time. I wish my wife would not go telling every body that I have got the gout. Can't she say, I have had a fever? There is something gay, and rakish, and chivalrous, in fever, — and, if there were but a hint of contagion, people would be glad to stay away till one is fit to be seen. She brought young Darley into my room just now, thinking he would amuse me with his senseless rattle, — and fancying that I really like the puppy, because I am always praising him, — which I do to hide that I am jealous of him with "Somebody." And now he will go to that dear pretty little creature, and make her die with laughing at his good stories, about my wretched looks, and my remedies, and my night-cap, — and my wife. Oh Lord! Oh Lord! what a plague it is to have the gout! — Any thing else I could have borne.

When will my trials end? — I really shall go crazy, and do myself a mischief. I never feel better inwardly for an hour or two, but it is a signal for some new torment, some fresh mortification, to assail me from without. I was better to-day — I had a parental impulse — I thought it might amuse me to see my children. — In they came, poor dears! — upon their little toes, for fear of making a noise to disturb me — my wife carrying the baby, whom she had taken from the nurse at the door.

" Thank you, dear papa, for my pretty present," came, with a kiss, from every little mouth, while every tiny hand displayed — what? — why, a confounding witness! a well known " trifle " — " token " — " keepsake " — " souvenir, " all which I had received — begged — stolen — or scrambled for, like a born idiot as I am, from my many female friends and correspondents; and which I had considered safely stored within the drawer of my writing-table, in my room below stairs.

Luckily the windows were half closed, and my confusion could not be seen, — and, as sheer surprise had taken from me all power to speak, my voice did not betray my agitation.

My wife approached my bed-side, and, holding her baby towards me, so that his rosy mouth should touch my parched and shrivelled lips, " You must not be angry with me," she said, " for giving the dear children the little presents you had so kindly collected for them. I looked into your table drawer for the tax-gatherer's paper. The children were by, and espied the pretty toys, and seized most of them before I could hide them amongst the papers; and they were so delighted, and so happy, that I had not the heart to take them away. Each seemed to guess what you had intended for him or her. Jemima took the scented sachet — Harriet the heart with the key to it, — Jackey said the little lady's riding-whip with the silver top was certainly for him, for you had promised him a pony — Tommy has the cup and ball — and Fanny the tiny tetotum; and, as for baby, we all said the egg full of sugar plums could not be meant for any thing bigger than he is — so we gave it to him, and he has emptied it already. This turquoise ring, which is too big and too handsome for a child, I know my kind husband meant for me upon my birthday; only you were too ill on that day to recollect any thing. I have it on my finger — and will never part with it — it fits exactly. — How do you find yourself now, my dear?"

"Oh! quite well, my dear, and quite comfortable, and quite happy — and at my ease, of course; how can I be otherwise? There, — take all the children away, and leave me to sleep."

To sleep! a pretty joke; and a pretty figure I cut, indeed! — So, — there she goes, with Belinda's ring upon her finger, which she swears she will never part with. Here's a pretty job! It is a remarkable ring, and she knows Belinda intimately — she is her own cousin. I shall go mad amongst them. I wish there was not a woman in the world, with all my heart.

Is she in earnest? Can she still be blind

— stupid — ignorant? Is she a fool? She used not to be one — she was not one when we married — and malice never was in her nature. She cannot have done all this in malice, surely? She cannot be so consummate an actress. Oh, no! I wrong her — poor Janet! She is honest, innocent, confiding. I am myself the fool, — the deceiver. It is my cruel fate which is now besetting me in every quarter. I must fly — there is nothing else for it. I will write to my steward directly, and live the rest of my life at Birchendown. How *can* I contrive to get possession of Belinda's ring? Once more in my possession, I'll make sure work of it. No one shall ever find *that* again.

Monday. — I shall never get well while I am exposed to these constant frights; for, though, thank heaven, they have all, as yet, been false alarms, still they agitate and worry me, and keep me awake, or cause me frightful dreams, just as if they were real. It would be better to fall into the precipice at once, and put up with the worst that could happen, than live for ever thus, trembling on its brink.

I have had a sad night.—The swelling of my foot and my knee was abating,—I was less feverish,—when these devils of "souvenirs" made me as bad as ever; and, although I got so well out of that scrape, it half killed me. Yesterday was an unlucky day for me from beginning to end. I had a second fright in the evening. I really must send my wife into the country, and make some excuse for getting her out of the way. How she does contrive to bore me, poor dear soul.

I could not sleep yesterday, after the children were dismissed, although I lay still to avoid speaking. Thinking I was fast, my wife stole out of the room, as I expected, to see the little ones put to bed.

When she returned, she held in her hand a large nosegay, the sight of which was so delightful and refreshing to a sick and gouty man—it formed such a cheering contrast with every thing else around me—that I bade her draw up the window blinds, and let me luxuriate over its gay colours, its fragrance, and its freshness.

" See what *somebody* has sent you," she said.

Good heaven! I thought she meant *my* " Somebody." My heart bounded to my throat. " Now for it!" thought I—" now for the grand explosion."

" See what a beautiful nosegay!" she continued—untying it, and spreading the sweet flowers before me: " here are roses, and carnations, and jessamine, and mignionette, and myrtle in blossom. I guess who sent it all, although no name came with it, and no message, excepting that it was for you."

" Who sent it?" I groaned.

" *Somebody* must have sent it,—*that* you will own," she said.

I groaned again.

" My sister Benson must have sent it," she continued. — " She was to come this evening from her pretty place at Richmond, where she has such lovely flowers. It *must* have been my sister Benson."

" God bless your sister Benson!" I exclaimed; " I never felt so grateful to any one before."

" I wish you could get to Richmond, dear," said my simple wife; " it is such a pretty spot, and such good air. My sister's house is close to the water side: you might be lifted into a boat, and we would leave the gout and all annoyances behind us."

" We *will* go there," said I, in a momentary extacy; " we'll go to-morrow."

She looked alarmed, for she thought me delirious to contemplate such a speedy act. She gathered up the scattered flowers, put them into water, placed them on a table by my side, and, gently closing the window blinds, took her usual station in a corner of the room.

And now I am come to the end of my scraps of journal, and I trust nearly to the end of my sufferings, together with my mortifications and exhibitions. I have read over what I have written, and I think it rather good, — for a gouty man; there is an air of candour in it which is admirable. In short, I am vain of my first effort as a writer, (I have already owned to the deadly sin of vanity,) and I shall go on now steadily, and wind up my narrative, but without dividing it into days. In another week or so, I hope to get to Richmond for change of air, and then I shall soon be well and happy again.

It is now three weeks since I was seized with the first symptoms of gout — I am certainly getting much better. I have had good nights and tranquil days, latterly. I needed rest from worry and pain of mind as well as of body. I have moved my quarters, and got into my wife's dressing room. Nobody but a gouty body can tell the delight of even a slight change of scene after acute suffering. I never shall be able to make use of that dull room again; (Janet must take it for her's); it makes my toe ache even now, when they open the door of it, and I catch a glimpse of those eternal blue and white striped curtains. The only thing that now bores me is Belinda's ring for ever upon my wife's finger.

I cannot move yet like a Christian; but I am in a Merlin's chair, (rare and blessed invention!) and I have all the small amusements incident thereto. I twist and turn myself about all day long – not at will, for I cannot guide it yet, and not much at pleasure, for I came bang up against the wall just now, and received a shock which set all the elastick fluid vibrating through every nerve and fibre in my body, in order that I might avoid playing Juggernaut upon my poor baby, who was innocently crawling on the floor. But this is comparative happiness to any thing I have experienced during the last three weeks.

And I have now settled the matter of the ring; thank heaven! I shall never see that again. I have been a sad rogue to poor dear Belinda; but the comfort of my life depended on it; and as soon as I am well I will make her give me another souvenir.

Of all those dear creatures, who are so very kind as to allow me to carry on a very pleasant sort of unprofitable liaison with them, which hurts no one, Belinda happens to be the one that I am the most attached to; and, at the same time, the most afraid of. She has so much wit, is so shrewd and clever, that she keeps me always in awe of her; but she is so charming, so beautiful, that I have allowed her to be a very despot, and to rule me with a rod of iron when she chooses: then she is very jealous, and I am forced to spend part of every day in her society, or I have her here, — under pretence of visiting my wife, but, in fact, to find out where I am, and what I'm doing.

Now, it would be more convenient to keep her to myself; so I have told Janet that I dislike her cousin Belinda, and that, now I must stay more at home, it will not be pleasant to have her, as third, constantly breaking in upon our comfortable tête-à-têtes. Poor dear little fool! she was pleased at this, and said it would be hard, indeed, if I might not choose my society in my own house, especially now, that illness had made me such a fixture at home.

" Leave it to me," she said; " I will contrive to keep Belinda away. But you must try to like her again, in time, for my sake."

I took her hand, as I thanked her for her ready compliance with my wishes; and, pointing to the obnoxious ring upon her finger, " My dear Janet," I said, " I am a strange fanciful being — I am taking a dislike to every thing excepting you: this ring bores me; it reminds me of gout, and of all the plague and trouble I have given you. Don't wear it any more; I will give you another, and a prettier; throw this away."

" You shall never see it again," she replied, taking it directly from her finger, and putting it in her pocket; "but I can't throw away a gift of yours."

"As you like," I replied; happy at having gained two essential points; and I feel quite relieved, and quite comfortable; for Janet never breaks her word; and I shall now be out of hot water about Belinda's ring, and Belinda; for Janet, with all her gentleness, has a way of doing things which, without being harsh, is very effective, and her whole study being to make me happy, and fond of my home, poor dear! she will soon manage to clear away Belinda. Belinda will think she is jealous, and that will not hurt me in her opinion. So all's well; and I am so much better, that my spirits and my appetite are improving hourly.

Some day or other what an excellent husband I will become! The next fit of gout will be a lucky one for Janet, I have no doubt — then *her* turn will come. A man cannot be expected to give up every thing at once. But I have begun my reformation — I have considered the subject, and left off stays, which are the first steps towards connubial bliss.

Another week is gone, and I am come to the last scene of my tragedy. Yes, another week is gone — and the gout is gone. Who would then believe that I am a more miserable being than ever? But I am; for my wife is gone too — and my children are gone — and all my happiness is gone — and Belinda's ring is come back again. It is even now lying before me on the table. What shall I do? It has all fallen so rapidly upon me — all in the last fatal hour — that I hardly know what has happened; and yet I know, beyond a doubt, that I am a very wretch.

I said Belinda's ring is lying before me on the table. Close to it is a letter in my wife's hand-writing, addressed to Belinda, and both sweet tokens — ring and letter — have just been sent to me by Belinda herself. Let the letter speak for itself and for me: —

“ Dear Belinda,

“ One ever increases one’s difficulties in “ attempting to disguise an unpleasant truth. “ I am sure it is always wisest to be honest; “ and I know you well enough to be convinced “ that it is your maxim, as well as my own, to “ do what is right, let what will come of it.

“ My poor husband has, as you must know, “ been greatly afflicted lately with the gout; “ indeed he has suffered much, and, upon the “ whole, very patiently. But I have often heard “ that this most painful disorder leaves a sort “ of restlessness in the system, which ill-natured “ people call peevishness, and which may cause “ a man to be a little capricious, even against “ his better judgment. It must be this usual “ effect of the gout that has made poor dear “ Herbert take some odd fancies since he has “ begun to recover. He won’t return to his “ own former room; he likes new objects about “ him, and takes dislikes to what he has liked “ hitherto, and been accustomed to. In short,

“ dear Belinda, without more preamble, he has “ taken an unaccountable dislike to you, of all “ people in the world! and has urged me so “ kindly, and yet so strongly, to banish you “ from our society, that I own I am at a loss to “ find a cause for it, much more any reason. But “ so it is — and, as it is, of course, my duty “ rather to offend a friend, than disobey a husband, I must act upon his orders.

“ But I shall not offend my dear Belinda in “ trusting this little family secret to her discretion. It is more pleasing to me to make this “ honest avowal of a husband’s caprice than “ run the risk of my cousin’s believing I am “ ungrateful to her for former kindnesses. Let “ me ask you then to avoid us for the present; “ all will be right soon, and Herbert will be the “ first to laugh with you over his nonsense.

“ I enclose a ring — wear it, dear Belinda, “ for my sake. I assure you it is one that I “ value, as the gift of my husband. But he has “ taken a dislike to this unoffending ring, too, "and has bid me to throw it away. I cannot throw away or cease to value a gift of "Herbert's, although I must cease to wear it "myself; so I give it to you, Belinda; and let "it remind you of the sincere affection which "you must feel you so well deserve from

"Yours, &c. JANET."

Now for another, and a still more agreeable epistle, if possible. Another letter in my wife's hand-writing, and addressed this time to myself. It was given to me a few minutes before the other arrived, and had already nearly been the death of me. Oh, Janet! one half of these mild, just reproaches, would have been sufficient to humble a husband, who can, at least, say this — He never yet did aught against you, however trifling the offence, even in the jealous eye of love, without his conscience pleading your cause so strongly, that he could not much longer have continued unfaithful to you in a look, a thought, or word.

But I must not give way — still must I play the bravo with my own vexed heart a little while, and wind up my narrative with what spirit I can muster. Janet's letter to me shall now be heard. I am a lover of justice. I am at this moment incapable of explaining what it shall tell for me, and for itself.

JANET'S LETTER.

" It is grievous indeed to me to be the " cause of inflicting pain upon you ; and yet " will I own honestly that I wish these lines " may pain you ; for, if they do not, then is all " hope of future happiness in this world shut " out from me for ever.

" When you shall receive this letter, your " wife and children will be many miles from " you on their way to Birchendown. I have " never been there since we were first married. " You had then just chosen me to be your companion — the sharer of your joys and sorrows " — and I fondly hoped, and firmly believed, I

" could have added to your happiness. I have " often seen and felt that I was mistaken in that " hope. But I imputed no blame to you ; and " fancied that no man of your age and disposi- " tion would have been contented any where " but in the constant round of society and " amusement which can be only found in Lon- " don, and at publick watering places, where, " for nine years, our lives have been wasted. " Yes, wasted ; — for what is the result ? No- " thing useful — nothing respectable ; and, if I " ask my own heart, nothing, even before my " late discoveries, worthy or honourable.

" Many things have occurred, during your " late illness, which might sooner have opened " the eyes of one less suspecting than I have " been. At length, however, the veil has been " wholly withdrawn ; and my husband has been " shown to me in a character (I blush as I write " it) which I am ashamed of.

" I have had an explanation with my " cousin, Belinda. Of course I ought to guard

" myself from judging of my husband upon the " word of any person, especially that of an " angry woman. But oh, Herbert!—the ring " —the turquoise ring! and, would that this " were all! I know Belinda is a gay, thoughtless " creature, and too eager, too happy should " I be, to throw all the blame upon her. But " what would be the use of a fond unjust palliation " in this one instance, when so many " other accidents have put it beyond a doubt " that I am deceived and despised?—yes, despised! " For can one place in situations such " as I have been placed in by you, or with " your sanction, a being who is really loved " and honoured?

" The enclosed miniatures will explain what " I have no heart, no courage, to mention " further.

" These letters, too, which I likewise enclose, " and which likewise fell by accident into my " hands, will remind you what must have been " my feelings upon perusing them. I cannot

" trust myself to speak of their contents; but I " must just say this, — had it not been for your " own poor and unnecessary device in telling " me that letters of this kind were always from " your lawyer, and generally required your immediate attendance in the city, never should " I have thought of opening them. But when " these two letters arrived almost together, and " I dreaded lest you should be disturbed at an " unseasonable hour (it was midnight), and yet " wished to judge if there were any real necessity for waking you,—and knowing already, as " I believed, the subject of them, — was I wrong " in opening them? But I was most unfortunate; and this is all I will allow myself to " say concerning them.

" I am going to Birchendown. As I do not " wish to excite any surprise in your family, I " shall act as if I came there by your desire. I " should not leave you were you not recovering " fast; but I found it impossible, now that you " are recovering fast, to delay any longer giv-

" ing way to my feelings. The painful restraint " under which I have existed during the last " few days is what I have no power to prolong. I have endeavoured to write with a " composure which I do not feel, but which " your still weak state of health demands from " me.

" My future lot must depend upon yourself " entirely. I am not without a hope, however " vague, however faint, that these afflicting circumstances may admit of an explanation " which shall prove to me that a portion of my " lost happiness may, in time, be restored — " that is, if you can find wherewithal, in a respectable and a very different manner of life " in future, and in my affection, to secure your " own happiness: if not — we must part. " Your wife may not continue to live as she " has lived — neglected by you — scoffed at — " and, with your sanction, by your companions.

" Janet."

Alas! Alas! —

> "Heaven first taught letters for some wretch's aid."

They were wont to —

> "Speed the soft intercourse from soul to soul."

But now, what do they bring *me?* Wretch that *I* am! Do they bring *me* "aid?" Do they "waft sighs?" No, no! They blow a tempest, a hurricane, which bursts upon me in upbraidings, lectures, scoldings, taunts, and tortures!

I sent a few incoherent lines, but very expressive of grief, love, gout, and repentance, to Belinda. They are just returned, unopened. What am I to do? miserable being that I am! There is but one road open to me — the dull, strait, highway of duty. I must even travel by that in future. No sweet meanderings — no gentle serpentinings — no devious bye-ways — no pretty doubles, nor trifling wanderings, may be permitted now; but the beaten, monotonous, uninteresting path — so plain, it cannot be mistaken — so obvious, I need not stay to ask my way — leading direct to home, to wife, and children. All blessings, doubtless, — of the first order.

This must now be mine! The chaise has waited at the door at least two hours — and now for Birchendown!

Postscript. — (dated) Birchendown.

"Yes — Iam still a miserable man. My cruel wife! she had it all her own way, one should have thought, without this last floorer, — this *coup-de-grace.* I cannot quarrel with her, for she is so useful to me in my infirm state, that I should not know what to do without her. And, all the time that I am smarting under the effects of her discipline, still I like her to show symptoms of character. I had begun to fear she had no spirit, or a tame one; for she had forgiven me!

But I must explain. In our first hours of meeting and reconciliation, — when my heart was opened, and grateful for her kind and frank forgiveness, and continued affection,—when I found that she knew so much, that I had it not in my power to make her acquainted with much more, even had I been inclined so to do, vanity, vanity, tripped up my heels, gouty as they are — and I made a merit of showing her my journal.

She had not quite given credit to my vows, that I had never, even in the worst of times for her, ceased to love her. I thought my journal would put that doubt to rest, and so, as I said, I showed it to her.

It did not amuse her so much as I expected. She was at first grave upon it, but allowed that any other person than herself might find it entertaining. She took it to reperuse in private. Little did I think she harboured any sinister design.

After a few days she returned it to me, with more compliments upon the style of my writing, which, she said, might have been better bestowed upon a better subject; but she urged me to turn my mind to authorship. Poor gull that I am! —I swallowed her praise as if I had deserved it, and asked no further questions. This happened about a month ago.

Good heaven! what was my surprise, my dismay — this very morning — while sitting at my reformed, early breakfast — when a packet of books arrived from Paternoster-row. I seized them, with an appetite for novelty, which nothing less than a novel itself, or a magazine, or a review, could assuage. I tore open the leaves of a magazine hastily, unmechanically, with the sugar-tongs — my eye fell upon an article —

"THE FIRST FIT OF GOUT — THE END OF MAN'S HAPPINESS."

The title I had given to my own journal — and it *was* my own journal — printed — published — verbatim!!!

And now, what *can* I say? Why — the truth — and nothing but the truth. A man never lies but when he is guilty!

My wife had stolen a copy of my journal — she had sent it to a respectable publisher — she had desired it might appear immediately.

Upon my honour, as a gentleman, it was entirely without my knowledge. I would give all I am worth in the world could I cause it to be unprinted — unpublished. I have sent an express to town, to order every copy that can be met with of that work to be bought up, at any price, and burned. May I linger out a long long life of acute, incessant gout, if I am not innocent. What more can I say, or do?

But dear — injured — exasperated beauties! will ye believe me? Will ye forgive me for ever having so rashly put pen to paper? There was my fault, my blunder, my excessive folly! I cannot kneel for pardon at your feet, for I cannot bend my knee; and I shall never dare again to approach the smallest of you. All I ask is, to be forgotten — if not forgiven. All I pray is, do not — do not laugh at me.

“Janet — Janet! why did you use me so?” I said: and what do you think was her cool reply? But no — I’ll not repeat it — I will give the substance of her sad prognosticks; but in my own spirit and words — not in her’s — for they would be *too* sad, — peradventure also, somewhat offensive.

“Dear, too dear — amiable, too amiable — sensitive, too sensitive — Beings, — whose only fault it has been to feel too kindly, and to write too much, — oh! while I am with sincere contrition lamenting over the faithlessness of those depositories which should have concealed from every eye but mine your kind remembrances, — while I deplore the blushing avowal which notes (*couleur de rose*) are too apt to make of their compassionate contents, — oh! may I hope this, at least, from your fidelity? — that you may not now be granting to others the privilege in their turn to bear any part like unto the melancholy part I have been forced to bear in these exposures; lest, peradventure, the natural impulse of testy jealousy should urge me to wish my rivals in your favour a gout, — a catastrophe, — and an exit, — as painful as my own!

G.

THE CONVENT IN THE FOREST.

In Bretagne, and within a few leagues of the ancient city of Nantes, there was formerly a small village, the situation of which was so peculiarly beautiful and romantick, that, at one time, it became a fashion, amongst the nobles and rich merchants, to purchase the cottages, and build in their stead small villas, whither they would occasionally retire in the summer-time from the bustle of the city, to enjoy refreshing quiet and repose. But the French do not love retirement, and a city is seldom too noisy or too busy for them. These villas, although constructed of wood and other perishable materials, lasted, in some instances, longer than the caprice out of which they had sprung; and, at the time of which I am speaking, all, excepting two, had fallen into decay, and had disappeared.

There was every thing in this favoured spot that could complete the landscape. Elevated, but sequestered, it lay far away from any publick road, and, like a modest beauty, it could not be discovered unless it were searched for. It was sheltered on the east by rocks, bold and broken, which formed numberless little platforms of various shapes and sizes; on many of which the natural fertility of the soil had thrown up tufts of forest-trees, growing, in conformity with the spaces allowed them, into the most fantastick and picturesque shapes. On the less abrupt parts of the rocks, sweet bays, myrtles, jessamines, and various other gay and flowering shrubs, had wound themselves into natural bowers and arbours, which showed like the work and the abode of fairies. To the west, the open country towards Nantes lay stretched like a map; the wildness of the foreground subsiding gradually into the cultivated formality characteristick of the neighbourhood of a populous city. Nantes itself was a noble object; and, even at this distance, might be seen its fair bridges, its venerable cathedral, and its castle, built and fortified by the ancient dukes of Bretagne, which still frowned in peaceful strength on the banks of the broad and beautiful Loire.

But perhaps the fairest scene is still to be described. Towards the north lay a tract of forest-land, widening in the distance, and extending further than the eye could follow. Beautiful were the deep woods, when topped by the glowing hues of the setting sun; and there too might be seen two sparkling white towers, then best to be distinguished, in the very heart of the forest. They were the belfreys belonging to a convent and a monastery, small and very ancient buildings, at some distance from each other; but, when thus seen, appearing almost to touch. These marked the only spots in that lone wilderness known to be inhabited by human beings.

Two persons sat, one evening, upon one of the highest juttings of the rock, which commanded a view of the whole of this magnificent scene. But they gazed not on the forest — they heeded not the city — they were regardless of the glories of the setting sun — they thought but of themselves and of each other.

Auguste Dumesnil was the only child of one of the most opulent merchants of Nantes. His father possessed the more conspicuous of the two remaining villas at "Le Bocage;" so had the spot we have described been called by those who had first brought it into notice. The other villa belonged to the Baron de Chaudraye, a nobleman of more rank than fortune, and one who carried high the pride of ancestry. It had led him to doom his young daughter to the cold austerities of a convent, that she might not, by requiring a marriage-portion befitting her lineage, impair the already slender patrimony that he had to bequeath to his son, a sickly infant in the cradle, who, in coming into the world, had cost his mother her life. Till the unlooked-for birth of this child, Adeline had been considered and treated as the Baron's heir. She had been allowed a greater degree of liberty, and more indulgence in society, than usually fell to the lot of so young a person, at that time, in France; and, even at the moment when I have described her, sitting at sunset on the highest jutting of the rock, although her doom was decreed in her father's cold and stubborn breast, she was ignorant of the hard fate that awaited her. Yet she was in tears, and her fair bosom heaved with strong emotion; for the two were lovers, and they had met to part, and her heart was now, for the first time, wrung with grief. Its wild impatient throbbings might even then have told that that proud heart might burst, but never bend, to a meek endurance of its wrongs. Her brow was now, for the first time, clouded by sorrow; but its slight contraction did even then betray marks of a high resolve, a dauntless spirit, and a firmness of purpose fearful, most fearful, in one so young, so inexperienced.

Her companion, Auguste Dumesnil, was in equal affliction; but the expression of his feelings was widely different. His demeanour was calm and manly: he whispered words of consolation; he clasped upon her arm a golden bracelet, adorned with emblems, and engraved with words of love, of hope, of constancy. He supported her agitated frame; he led her to the entrance of her father's garden; he folded her once more to his young and faithful bosom. But why should I attempt to describe so sad a parting? what need to follow either sorrowful heart?—Oh! if either, it should not be that most desolate, most pitiable one, that was left in its bereavement to gaze upon the now empty scenes of its former happiness.

It requires time to school a young and

ardent mind to patience under a sudden and overwhelming grief. The spirit is already tamed, and the heart is already subdued to its fate, that can soon be soothed by the charms of a beloved spot in the unlimited absence of the object whose presence first endeared it. The impatience of a heart new to suffering, and full of unrestrained and strong affections, rejects such ineffectual solace. It is taunted by, it recoils from, scenes of peace and tranquillity: the contrast is too great — too sudden. It rather seeks what is in acordance with its own despair — it would even joy to see in the whole fair face of nature nothing but what is wild and rugged, as its own torn feelings.

Auguste and Adeline had grown up together from infancy at "Le Bocage." As children, they had often been left at the villas, when their parents had been obliged to return to the city. Every rough cavern in the rocks, every smiling myrtle bower, that had once been the scene of their childish sports, had since become that of their stolen meetings; for, although they had not been forbidden each other's society, still their sanctioned intercourse had been gradually more and more restricted as they advanced in years; and many a slight and casual token had already announced to the quick eye of love, that the Baron de Chaudraye looked down with disdain (which, in truth, concealed no small portion of envy) on the plebeian prosperity of his rich but ignoble neighbour.

The Baron had, for some time, resided with his family constantly at "Le Bocage:" not that he had a mind capable of deriving enjoyment from the picturesque beauties that there surrounded him, (although they formed his pretext for passing his days in a small chamber, with his back to the prospect, and his head bending over a chess-board, or the tree of his genealogy,) but, in reality, because the very small establishment that he could accommodate within the villa suited with the dilapidated state of his fortune, which could ill have met the expensive and ostentatious charge, which he fancied his rank required him to support, when at his old hereditary hôtel at Nantes.

Monsieur Dumesnil, on the contrary, always happy to quit the fatigues of business, and too much engaged to be often at “Le Bocage,” really enjoyed the moments he could pass there, and, in his turn, envied the situation of the Baron, whose exemption from the toils and superfluities of life, left him, as Dumesnil thought, leisure to be happy. Thus Monsieur Dumesnil was, in fact, the man of simple taste and mind that the Baron only affected to be; while the needy nobleman was the insolent, overbearing tyrant, whom he was determined to consider Monsieur Dumesnil to be;—and this for no other reason than because his villa at “Le Bocage” accidentally reared its head above the Baron's villa, in about the same proportion that the Baron de Chaudraye desired to raise himself, in his impotent pride of ancestry, above the merchant Dumesnil. Out of petty jealousies such as these, sprung a dislike on the Baron's side towards his unoffending and unconscious neighbour, which was fostered by solitude, idleness, and ill humour, into an insurmountable disgust and hatred.

His anger may be easily conceived, when some kind friend, or bitter enemy, (which shall we call that person who, by officiously opening our eyes, destroys our happiness?) brought private intelligence to the Baron of the clandestine meetings of the lovers. He had already resolved upon his daughter's fate, and this news but hastened his measures. His immediate concern was, how to contrive that Auguste should be sent to a distance, while he should use his parental authority in obliging Adeline to take the veil. Chance favoured him in his unnatural design. The revolutionary war was just breaking out; and young Dumesnil received peremptory orders to join his regiment, near Paris. The Baron prudently waited his time, and shut his eyes, while the lovers indulged in the few stolen meetings which the shortness of the time allowed them.

And had they no friend — no kindly help?— Could a love so tender, so natural, excite no sympathy?—Yes; there was an ear that listened to their sorrows — there was a voice that spoke of comfort; and, at the same time that it exhorted them to present patience, sanctioned the hope of future happiness. Their secret had been confided to the keeping of one being, to whom every act of their blameless lives — every thought and wish of their innocent hearts — had been committed from their earliest infancy. Father Etienne had always been a welcome guest with the inhabitants of "Le Bocage." He loved to dwell in the lone monastery of the forest; but would often quit his retirement to perform the duties of friend and confessor in the families of the Baron and of Monsieur Dumesnil. He was beloved of young and old: even the moody Baron rejoiced at his arrival, and would arrange the chess-board, in pleasing anticipation of the victory, which the good-natured Father seldom failed to concede to his noble antagonist.

He it was who now stepped between the lovers and their despair — who offered to become the channel through which the young soldier should inform his Adeline of his proceedings. Many and fervent were the thanks and the blessings he received from them both for this unhoped-for sympathy and indulgence.

Auguste was gone; — and what became of Adeline? She knew her cruel fate but too soon. She received her father's stern command to prepare for the cloister. Resistance, bold and strong, was to be expected from a spirit so high and daring. She refused obedience to her father's orders. She wrote to Monsieur Dumesnil. She disclosed to him her love for his son — told of their hopes, their vows — and demanded protection at his hands. Monsieur Dumesnil flew to her rescue. He made offers, in the name of his son, which no feelings softer than those of pride and hatred could have refused. All, all in vain! they were rejected with scorn, with insult; and, notwithstanding the tears, prayers, threats, frenzy, of the unfortunate girl, she was removed by force to a convent within the city walls, to perform her noviciate. Even curiosity dared not follow her there, and nothing more was known. But Monsieur Dumesnil prepared for a journey to Paris. He resolved, as well as threatened, to move the tribunals — to recall his son — to leave no means untried that might release the sufferer from her persecutors. But this step, together with all further interference, was rendered useless; for soon, alas! too soon, — the great cathedral bell tolled loud and solemnly for the heart-broken victim of a father's pride; and Adeline de Chaudraye was buried with pomp in the magnificent family vault, which had been constructed by the Baron as close as was permissible to the tombs of the ancient

Dukes of Bretagne, from whom (as he used to boast) he had derived his origin.

But the Baron returned not to "Le Bocage." His cruelty had caused a grave to be opened; and that grave seemed greedy of its prey. The sickly boy soon followed his sister. This was indeed a death-blow to the Baron, who lingered for some time in hopeless imbecility, forgotten and neglected, and then was carried to his ostentatious but unhonoured tomb.

These melancholy and striking events, together with increasing anxiety for their son, which the disturbed state of many parts of the country occasioned his parents, took from Monsieur and Madame Dumesnil all desire to renew their visits to "Le Bocage." It was now entirely deserted; for even Father Etienne had retired to the monastery in the forest, and was never again seen where he could no longer be the messenger of peace and comfort, or the promoter, as well as preacher, of social kindness and good will.

But it is time we should enquire after Auguste. Six long years were gone since he had parted from Adeline and happiness. A man's heart has room for many feelings, and many duties, and many pursuits. The desire of fame, the love of country, may well be permitted to occupy their part. So it was with Auguste. But still he loved with undiminished fervour; and never formed a plan of future bliss but in the society of his Adeline. Every airy fabrick of peace and happiness was reared in the well-remembered and cherished scenes of their joyous infancy. The heart of the young soldier still beat high with hope; and hope still promised a reward to his constant affection.

Six long years were gone, and he had received no tidings from Father Etienne, nor even from his family. But the now distracted state of France, and his own frequent and sudden changes of station, were sufficient to account for this, and to lull at least a part of his anxiety.

At length, upon his return to Paris, he found several letters from his father. They had been written and sent at different periods, and some of them had been long detained in places to which they had followed him in vain, and spoke of others which must have been entirely lost. One of these letters gave intelligence of Adeline's death, with the few known particulars concerning her sad fate. Another, of a later date by three years, brought news, which, had it reached him at a time of less absorbing grief, would alone have filled his heart with sorrow. But now it only added to the bewilderment of his senses, without being capable of adding to his already full affliction. The meek, the good Father Etienne, the indulgent friend and guide of his boyhood and youth, had met with a dreadful and violent end. He had been discovered, early one morning, murdered, in the chapel of the monastery. Every endeavour had been used to detect the perpetrators of this most foul and inexplicable act, but all without effect; and the poor Father's death remained a mystery, and unavenged.

Auguste's health gave way at once under intense suffering. He had a long and dangerous illness. He was no longer fit for military duty, and easily obtained leave of absence to visit his parents, at Nantes. It was not that he felt he could ever again be the minister of happiness to them; nor did he expect to derive any comfort from their society: and yet he resolved to undertake the journey. Alas! his poor heart panted for solitude, and welcomed the thought of once again visiting the now-deserted scenes of former happiness, now for ever lost, and of his last parting with Adeline.

Worn by sickness, and by grief, deep and hopeless, Auguste could only accomplish a long journey, at an inclement season, by very easy stages, resting whenever he found his strength fail him to proceed. At last he reached, by a circuitous and unfrequented road, which he had chosen by design, the skirts of the well-known forest of——. The day was closing rapidly, and with all the indications of an approaching storm. There was that boding pause in the elements — that sudden and dread stillness amongst living things, which so often precedes the rudest shocks of nature. Man, perhaps more helpless than all other living things, because without the aid of that unerring instinct which gives them natural warning of danger, trusts to his own most weak philosophy, and rashly defies the power of what he can neither resist, controul, nor understand. The wild melancholy of the scene was in unison with the sad musings of Auguste, and he ventured on. True, he had often travelled by that lone road, and at all hours, and in all seasons; but it was when his step was firm, and his heart light, and when an eye was watching for him, and an ear was listening — that might not watch, that might not listen in vain; and when there was one who would seek no rest herself, nor screen her own fair bosom from the rough night air, till he was safe and sheltered. Alas! how changed! how many and how agonizing were the recollections that crowded upon his memory! He groaned aloud, and saved his heart from bursting.

Father Etienne, too, his old friend and tutor, beloved from infancy, and most beloved because indulgent to his passion for Adeline — he, too, claimed a sigh of grateful remembrance and of bitter regret; and Auguste felt a strong desire to visit the poor Father's near and humble grave. He knew the situation of the monastery, and he rode, as he imagined, towards it. The storm was increasing rapidly; he was far advanced in the depths of the forest, and at a distance from any other shelter, and there he would find safety, and, though poor, yet timely, hospitality. The wind was howling wildly through the woods, in blasts as loud and fearful as the peals of thunder which at intervals joined their roar. The night was dark, cold, and very dismal, and even the flashes of vivid lightning scarce could pierce the deep gloom of the tall black trees. Auguste was obliged to dismount and lead his horse, already sinking with fatigue. He could find no path, and he walked at random. At length he gained a small opening in the forest: he knew not where he was, and he paused to determine upon his course; when a glimmering light, visible only at intervals, but stationary, gladdened his sight, and, straining his ear to the uncertain, but most welcome sound, he distinguished the slow tolling of a bell, often hushed and smothered in the loud gusts of wind.

The hope of speedy shelter again revived his almost exhausted strength and spirits: he endeavoured to lead on his horse, when a tremendous and continued crash of thunder, accompanied by several quickly succeeding sheets of blue lightning, which for some seconds lingered upon the near and venerable building, from which the light and the sound of the bell proceeded, so terrified the animal, that, starting back with sudden force, he drew the bridle from his master's hand, and, rushing headlong into the forest, was lost to sight and hearing in a moment. The disappointment of Auguste may be imagined on perceiving that those were not the walls of the monastery to which, as a boy, he had so often wandered, and which were so familiar to his eye. But he knew they could not be far distant, for that the pile near which he stood must necessarily be part of the outer buildings of the neighbouring convent, of which we have already spoken.

Still he walked on in the direction of the light. It proceeded from the chapel, a portion of which extended beyond the convent walls. It was closely surrounded by high trees, and it had been the bowing and tossing of their branches in the wind that had obscured, at intervals, the light, which now gleamed bright and steadily through the narrow windows.

One of these trees had been newly torn up by the roots, and had fallen, with tremendous force, upon the little chapel, burying its trunk deep into the mossy roof, and breaking down a part of the ivied wall. Without pausing to consider further, Auguste determined to enter the chapel by this breach, and there to await the dawning of day. He found more difficulty in this attempt than he expected: the massive wall had been forced down within side of the chapel; while on the outside, the matted ivy, the growth of ages, opposed a tough and persevering barrier to his efforts, as if collecting all its tangled and luxuriant powers to guard the entrance of that ancient masonry, under whose supporting shelter it had attained its present strength.

At last he arrived within the chapel. In such a place, on such a night, could he be insensible to a feeling of satisfaction at the sight of any human being? But the human beings who now met his gaze seemed much more to require, than to be able to afford, the aid of which our toil-worn traveller stood in such urgent need. The tree, in falling, had not only broken in the roof of the chapel, but it had also torn away a large portion of the oaken screen which separated it from the interiour of the convent, and a large low chamber, imperfectly lighted by another lamp, was thus opened to the view of Dumesnil. Amidst the fragments, and on the very threshold of what had for so long been the parting barrier between the world and them, impelled so far by unconquerable curiosity, but withheld from venturing one step further by a still stronger barrier, religious awe, stood a little group of terrified and trembling nuns. Auguste approached them, briefly explaining, and apologising for, his intrusion, and offering to retire immediately if he might not be permitted to remain till day-break in the shelter of their chapel. The poor frightened beings first ran wildly from him, and motioned him away; but, before he could understand or obey their gestures, they returned, clasping their hands, and uttering words of fear and indecision. They seemed to move and act in a body, and frequently turned, and always with signs of terror, towards an object which Auguste had not at first perceived. It was a bier, or rather a tressel-bed, upon which lay extended a figure, in the habit of a nun, partially covered with a pall, and apparently lifeless. At this moment, the tempest, which for some little while had been hushed, or had raged only at a distance, resumed its fury, and its now doubled violence seemed directed to this devoted pile. The chapel shook to its foundations, and every instant threatened some great and destructive crisis.

Aghast with terror, the women clung to one another, knelt, and endeavoured to pray aloud; but their voices were drowned in the surrounding hurricane; large pieces of the loosened masonry fell in amongst them, wound-ing some, and obliging all to leave the spot. And now, two old and feeble nuns, who yet appeared to be somewhat more capable of controuling their fears than the others, ordered the rest to retire further within the convent, and, in a short time, all but these had disappeared. They stood trembling and irresolute, turning alternately towards Auguste and the bier, and communing with each other in low whispers. At length they approached the broken screen, and, leaning over some of the fragments, they addressed him with voices which age and terror rendered at first almost inarticulate.

They said he might, if he pleased, continue under that shelter, from which their walls could no longer exclude him; but they charged him, by his hopes of heavenly grace and mercy they charged him, not to attempt to penetrate further into their holy retreat, and not to pass what had so lately been the parting screen. "And oh!" said they, "you need not wish it. Beyond this screen there is a sight would make you welcome even this dreadful tempest's power, so that it drove you far from these dismal walls."

Auguste hastened to calm their apprehensions, by assuring them he would attend to their wishes, and also that he would depart with the first dawn of light. "But what," he asked, "may be the fearful sight you speak of? Can my poor help ——" "Alas! alas!" cried one, "do not seek to know; — be warned, — be wise, — be ignorant, — overstep not the sacred limits, — lift not the pall, — look not upon the corpse!" "It is the awful nun," rejoined the other sister; and both women muttered alternately in broken sentences, as they slowly passed the object of their fears and prohibition. "It is the sad, the silent nun. — She died at sunset, when this unearthly storm began: — and oh! may we ne'er live to witness such another parting. — So will it ever be with those who leave this world unshrived of sin! Her's must have been most black — most secret; for she never spoke; no, neither to nun nor priest, till this night of terror; and then, it was without her judgment; — and oh! such words! — such words!" . . . And suddenly, as if recollecting their own situation, and the presence of Auguste, "Sir, sir," said they, in a hasty but authoritative tone, "begone before the day appears; for then we must assemble here, to pray for mercy on that poor sinner's soul." — And they vanished in the gloom of that wide chamber.

Auguste was left alone. The scene, dismal as it was, had hitherto small power to affect a mind already so deeply engrossed by its own sad thoughts and recollections. He had scarcely listened to the poor women's childish expressions of their fears and superstitious fancies. He had even been impatient for their departure. But now that they were gone, — now that the storm was again hushed, and sinking into distant melancholy moanings, —

now that the glare of the lamp within the chamber rested steadily upon the stillness of the object on the bier, and that the mournful silence was only occasionally broken by the slow and regular tolling of the bell, and the sudden and near scream of the raven, — now did he wish most heartily that he had persisted in his endeavours to reach the monastery, or had patiently abided the worst pelting of the tempest, rather than have sought such comfortless shelter. Although he had taken small note of the words of the two nuns at the time they were spoken, they now forced themselves upon his recollection to confound and appal him; — and, strange as the thought for a while appeared, he began to feel a wish that he might look upon the corpse. It became by degrees an unconquerable uneasiness, and he determined to satisfy his curiosity. He hesitated as he reached the broken screen, and his heart throbbed with a feeling resembling remorse as he stepped across the prostrate fence which lay between him and the forbidden space beyond; and he strove, but in vain, to master the wild fancy that impelled him onwards. Without power to resist, he approached the tressel-bed. After a short pause of nervous indecision, his hand mechanically raised the pall. He gazed for one short moment, and he let it fall.... The awful times in which he had lived, and the duties of his military calling, had obliged him to witness scenes and objects most horrible, and most afflicting. He had looked upon death in its most revolting shapes, and among its direst accompaniments. He had become familiar with it — he had even learnt to hail its grim image, as the welcome finisher of human suffering — the herald of triumph over the efforts of human cruelty. But never, never before, had his eyes rested upon so appalling an object as the one at which his sight now sickened. It was like nothing living; it was too emaciated for that. It was like nothing dead; too many earthly passions still curled the thin disdainful lip; too many lines of human violence still lingered on the dark distorted brow.

Auguste had been greatly shocked; but he had now indulged his fancy in its strange weakness, and he endeavoured to banish from his thoughts the fearful form from which his heart shrunk, and at the contemplation of which his whole frame shuddered. He tried to believe that the excitement of his nerves had aggravated the real gloom of the surrounding scene, and he resolved to resume his firmness, and nerve his mind against any return of such unworthy weakness. He refreshed the lamps with some oil which had been left in a cruise; then, throwing himself into a large oaken chair, and drawing his horseman's cloak closely over his head and face, he courted that repose of which both mind and body had such urgent need.

But vain were all his efforts. Still, and however combated, his thoughts reverted to that appalling figure, and an irresistible impulse forced him to the bier again — again to lift the pall. A great and a wonderful change had taken place. The stiffened joints had all relaxed. The dark brow was now but slightly bent, exhibiting an expression of woe, not pain. The thin features had assumed a very mournful, but not unlovely cast; and the blue livid skin was now white and smooth as Parian marble.

Auguste stood in melancholy mood, yet pleased that he had had the courage to look again; gazing long and intensely on the dead nun. Alas! he thought, she too may have been beautiful, and she too may have been happy once. Those eyes may have been radiant with bright and joyous hopes. It was said, that she was guilty; but surely guilt looks not thus. She may have been unhappy. Oh yes! for she may have loved! and lost him whom she best loved! Alas! that hollow eye — that careful brow — that sunken cheek!

they tell more of sorrow than of guilt. But oh! whate'er it be, you are tranquil now, poor sufferer! Rest in peace! . . .

Again he strove to seek repose at a distance from the bier; but still it was impossible, and again did feelings, strong, strange, and irresistible, draw him to its side. But those feelings were changed. He had lately reproached himself for his restless and unwarranted curiosity: he had been struck with horror and disgust. But now a not unpleasing sadness soothed his mind, and he hung over the body with a sensation bordering on tenderness. He spoke aloud as he addressed the inanimate object before him: — " And who would shun thee?" he said; " and who would fear to gaze upon thee, " tranquil image of the only tranquil state? " Would I were by thy side! would I could " share thy peaceful, humble grave! My heart " yearns towards thee! it hails thee as welcome " company, even as its fitting bride. Oh, Ade-

"line! death is not thy rival — I woo it and "thee as one!"

Auguste at length found himself overpowered by fatigue. He drew the heavy oaken chair close to the pallet. He sunk into it, and gave way to a state of drowsy forgetfulness. His spirits became composed as the exhaustion of his body acted upon his mind. He encouraged recollections calm and soothing. He dreamed of former days — days of gay hope — days of fair promise — he dreamed of Adeline! His own name was uttered with a piercing cry! — the voice was the voice of Adeline! He started on his legs. Oh, God! it was no dream — the nun was leaning forwards on the pallet. One arm was stretched towards him — the beams of the lamp struck upon a well known, a bright, and golden bracelet, which hung upon that upraised wasted arm! . .

. . . .

It was not till many weeks after the events of that night that Auguste again was conscious that he looked upon the light of day. He was in his father's hôtel at Nantes, and in the chamber which had been his own in boyhood: it had suffered no change. The little coloured prints, which his hand had framed and placed, still hung upon the walls. The same indulgent father, who had watched over and instructed his youth, still leant over him with kind solicitude, and the bosom of the same fond mother still pillowed his head. All intervening years, with all their load of suffering, had vanished from his mind. The sight of his parents had brought back only those early recollections which were blended with scenes of home and happiness.

But soon he marked, and with inquisitive attention, the sorrowful expression of his father's eye; and his cheek was wet with his mother's scalding tears. *Such* was not the wonted, well-remembered welcome. Alas! and what had happened?—Adeline!—At that fatal name the cloud which had hung, as if in pity, over the past, began to open, and the dreadful truth broke in with new, but fortunately with gradual light, upon his amazed and weakened understanding. It was long before he could collect and arrange the particulars of his journey, and of his nightly visit to the convent in the forest. His strong impression was, that the nun was no other than his long-lost, and now again lost, Adeline. Yet how was he to reconcile so wild an idea with the accounts he had received, and which his father now, at his request, repeated, and with undeviating exactness, of her early death, and publick funeral? He longed for liberty, and for a degree of bodily health that might permit his going once more to the convent. He would fain have doubted if indeed he ever had been there, and laboured to persuade himself, that the events, which had retained so fast a hold on his feelings, had been altogether the effect of illness and a disordered imagination. He had closely questioned his father concerning the time and manner of his arrival at home; who constantly assured him that it had occurred as follows: — He had entered the house one day with every symptom of illness and of excessive bodily fatigue. He had spoken to no one, and had appeared to know no one; but had passed through the court, and up the stairs, to his own former apartment; — there he had thrown himself upon the bed, — from whence, for many weeks, he had never risen, — and the first signs of his returning consciousness had taken place on the morning when he had been for the first time sensible of the presence of his parents, who had never left his side during the whole of his long and distressing illness.

Auguste was most anxious to comply with all that was deemed necessary for the recovery of his health. At first, his parents hailed these symptoms with joy and thankfulness. But they soon perceived that it was only in furtherance of some hidden purpose that he submitted to what at the same time he felt as a most irksome restraint. They looked with uneasiness to the use he was likely to make of his liberty, for they guessed that his heart yearned toward the favourite haunts of his happy youth; and they thought, with well-grounded alarm, on the effect which the changed and neglected appearance of "Le Bocage" was likely to produce upon his spirits, already so overwrought and so sorely wounded.

But there was now a spot which caused an interest still more acute; and he first went to the convent in the Forest. He had not been deceived. It was indeed the same lone building to which he had wandered in the storm, and, as if yet further to prove its identity, the fallen tree was still lying across the little chapel. But the breaches it had made had been carefully, though roughly, repaired, and the tree remained bedded in the roof, now forming a part of it, and sheltering what it had failed to destroy. Some of its roots had not been separated from the earth; and the large overshadowing branches were budding with new and verdant foliage.

Auguste demanded with earnest importunity an audience of the superiour; and, after some hesitation and delay, was admitted to the parlour. A venerable woman appeared within the grate, and desired to know the occasion of his visit. He told her he was the traveller who had lately sought shelter from the tempest in the chapel of her convent, on that disastrous night which she must well remember; and, for reasons of the highest importance to himself, he besought her to confide to him the name and family of the sister, whose dead body he had then seen within the screen. The abbess earnestly declared ignorance of both her name and lineage; adding, that she had been considered mad; and that some awful circumstances attending her death (which had taken place during that fearful storm) had had much effect at the time upon the minds of the other nuns. To his further questions the abbess replied that, upon the first dawning of the following morning, when she herself, with her little community, had met for divine service, a stranger was discovered lying senseless on the floor of the chamber beside the bier. His position had been easily accounted for by those nuns who had seen him in the chapel. They concluded that he had been unmindful of their prohibition; that he had rashly passed the sacred limits; and that he had been justly punished for the sacrilege. They deemed that he had fainted upon witnessing the horrours of the sad sight they had warned him of; for the pall was removed from the corpse, whose appearance was, if possible, more awful and appalling than ever. As for the stranger, he had been lifted by the officiating priests into the open air, — where, as they had heard, he had soon recovered his sense of life, but not his understanding, and a countryman had undertaken to guide him to some dwelling. This man had soon returned with intelligence, that, after supporting him with much difficulty through a part of the Forest, he had reached with him a beaten path, which led to the city; that the stranger had then, of his own accord, suddenly struck into it, and was soon out of sight.

With trembling hesitation, Auguste enquired if any ornament had been found upon the dead nun. " None whatever," replied the abbess; —" such worldly vanities may not have harbour here. The sisters were afraid to look again upon her; and she was buried that night in the habit in which she died. May she rest in peace!"

Auguste turned to depart; but the abbess motioned him to approach the grate, and after a short pause she said,—" I have a duty to perform, which requires the aid of some one who has liberty to leave these walls; and there is that in your countenance and deportment which tells me you would not disregard or break a promise, a solemn promise. Will you swear to deliver this paper to the person to whom it is addressed? It was committed to my hands by the departed sister, whose corpse you saw. She spoke to me but once; this was a short time before her death; and she enjoined me, with more earnestness than befits a worldly care, she enjoined me to cause the safe delivery of this paper. She said my poor convent would benefit by my faithful discharge of the trust. Will you swear to deliver it?"—" I will, I will," cried Auguste, with half frantick energy; —" and as I keep my word may Heaven deal with me!" The abbess passed a roll of paper through the grate, and disappeared. It was closely sealed, and addressed " To Auguste Dumesnil, of Nantes."

These were its contents: —

" Auguste; — lost, but ever loved, loved to " the last! how shall I tell it you? I live, — " your Adeline lives! — she writes to you, but " only to bid you spurn her from your heart—

“ from your pity — from your memory.—She is “ dead to you; — and she is miserable, for she “ is guilty !

“ The sinner’s heart best knows the deepness “ of its own guilt. It is accuser, witness, “ judge, against itself, and searches out with “ severest, most ingenious justice, the penalty “ from which it shrinks with greatest horror. “ It is in the weakness, the cowardice, the “ hypocrisy of our nature, that we fly to “ other and to milder inquest than that of our “ own unerring consciences. I needed no monitor, beyond that within my own torn breast, “ either to lay bare to me my sin, to teach “ me to detest it, or to command my penance. “ That penance shall be faithfully performed. “ For the world,—I valued not its praise when “ I was innocent; I care not for its reproaches “ now that I am guilty. I am weary of a “ painful burthened life, and death, by the “ hand of justice, would be a mercy I could “ grasp at. Whom then should I punish and

“ degrade by a public confession of my crime?
“ whom but you? oh, ever dear!—my fame
“ might still live cherished and unspotted in
“ your memory—but no—it shall not be.
“ To you I will expose my guilt in all its
“ hideousness; and thus I submit, I voluntarily
“ submit, to torments such as no earthly judge
“ could sentence me to undergo; and I call
“ down upon my self-devoted head (bowed
“ already to the dust) the only human censure
“ that has power to sink it lower. Auguste—
“ I am a murderess! Father Etienne died by
“ my sacrilegious hand!

“ It is a long, a fearful story, but it must be
“ told;—and I must recall that day, that heavy
“ day, the last of my peace, when our young
“ hearts first sunk with a prophetick gloom at
“ parting. You, and hope, and happiness, had
“ left me. I soon became the victim of a
“ father’s pride and cruelty. I was dragged to
“ a convent, and commanded to take the veil;

“ to forget you!—you, Auguste! but I did “ not even wish that such obedience were in my “ power. No; I lived upon the recollection of “ your love — I gloried in the sufferings to “ which, for its dear sake, I was condemned. “ I was most true to you, and to our vows— “ (even in my present deep humiliation there is “ satisfaction in that thought)—I braved my “ persecutors, and baffled their attempts to force “ me to compliance; but they told me you were “ slain—they showed me letters that announced “ and described your death, with particulars of “ so much courage, so much manly virtue, and “ so much solicitude and love for me, that,— “ oh! my fond, my credulous heart!—it believed them!

“ I forget what followed; I only know they “ did with me as they pleased. I made but one “ request — it was to be removed to the convent “ in the forest; we had often together gazed “ upon its distant peaceful towers, and I thought “ I could be tranquil there, in that lone

" wilderness. My wish was granted; but " first, and almost unconsciously, I took the " vows that were to separate me for ever from " the world. I felt not the sacrifice; it was " none then to me. I had lost you; and the " world might well be closed for me. Oh! " would that all had ended here! But, even " in this holy place, this deep retirement, " human interests found or forced an entrance, " and I heard you lived! — Again the world " appeared open to my view, and with double " value, with augmented splendour. The " world, with all its interests, and its many " charms, seemed again to belong to my young " and loving heart! Oh! they may preach " its nothingness; — in vain — in vain! for " who would leave the summer warmth, and " forego to bask in the golden sun? Who " would refuse to listen to the chant of joyous " birds, or to inhale the healthful invigorating " breeze, because, in its due appointed time, " winter will surely follow? Alas! alas! my

" winter was already come — a sudden, lasting " winter —without gradual approach, or natural " warning. I had lost the blessings of love and " life in one dread wreck — all my fair hopes " were blighted in one short, fatal storm — and " all beyond was ruin and desolation!

" But was this so? and was I indeed so " lost? when I had been doomed to misery by " fraud and cruelty, and by an act in which my " own will had borne no part.—And could then " such an act be binding? It had been a deed " of parental despotism, aided by mistaken " religious zeal; for more truths had broken in " upon my half-frenzied mind, and by degrees " I had learned the whole black mystery. " Father Etienne had deceived me. In his " strange zeal for the glory of the church, he " had marked me for its victim from my earliest " infancy. Our fond affection had crossed his " views, but could not turn him from his " purpose. He understood the human heart " too well to venture open conflict with its

“ fondest hopes. He had listened with seeming
“ indulgence to the out-pourings of our young
“ hearts —he had done so, but to strike with
“ surer aim the poor lone victim. Alas! what
“ warrant could he find in the sacred pages of
“ perfect truth for fraud and falsehood? How
“ could he imagine Heaven would accept the
“ extorted sullen service of the lips, while the
“ rebellious heart was panting after worldly
“ affections? The affections were innocent; the
“ surrender only was the sacrilege. It was the
“ priest who had early filled my father’s mind
“ with objections to our love; he had been the
“ secret spy who had betrayed our meetings;
“ and he it was who fabricated the story of
“ your death, together with the forgeries which
“ gave it a false, but fatal plausibility.

“ I was unknown in the convent. Such had
“ been my own desire, and such the condition
“ upon which I had obtained the one indulgence
“ respecting the choice of my living grave. I

“ soon perceived that the other nuns thought “ me mad, and I was careful to encourage the “ opinion. I avoided all intercourse with them, “ and maintained a stubborn silence. I even “ concealed my features from their sight, which “ I fancied might betray to them the sorrows “ of a heart which scorned their useless sympathy; and I had now begun to harbour “ feelings of hatred, and desires of vengeance, “ which, even in their undefined infancy, were “ such as shrunk from notice.

“ I heard that Father Etienne had retired to “ the neighbouring monastery. The feigned “ friend, the subtle secret enemy, the cold “ deliberate destroyer of my peace, was near “ me, was almost within hearing of the cry of “ my despair. I know not when the deadly “ thought first passed across my brain—I “ meditated but to gain my liberty. It is true, “ I thirsted for vengeance, and would brood “ over it in many shapes; but never, never in “ my wildest, worst, imaginings, did I contem-

“ plate a deed so foul, so bloody. I had “ succeeded in silencing my conscience with “ regard to my vows.—Vows, in which my will “ had never joined, I thought could be binding “ only upon a weak and servile spirit. In “ short, you, Auguste, were in the world, and “ I persuaded myself the world might still “ acknowledge me.

“ I had obtained some degree of liberty, “ owing to the studied composure of my deportment, when observed: and, under the “ impression that my mind was lost, although “ my state was harmless, I was seldom reproved “ for absenting myself occasionally from our “ religious ceremonies. I gradually lengthened “ these absences, and sometimes remained for “ whole days at a time within my cell. Then “ I affected a childish fondness for flowers, and “ would follow an old lay-sister, whose duty it “ was to cultivate a few vegetables in the “ convent garden, and who was permitted to “ search in the forest for simples necessary for

“ the sick and infirm. She was old and lame; “ and her task was a painful one; and, as I “ constantly assisted her, and never showed “ any desire to quit her side, she would now “ and then suffer me to follow her when she “ passed the gate. By degrees I would wander “ a few steps from her — but I ever took care “ to bring back to her, mixed with the wild “ flowers that I collected, such a supply of the “ roots and herbs most wanted, as was sure to “ procure for me a repetition of the indulgence. “ I was thus enabled closely to observe the “ walls of the convent garden. They were “ much decayed and broken, and, in several “ places, the breaches had been repaired with “ but a false show of strength. There I might “ easily effect an escape. During these few “ half-stolen, half-permitted, wanderings, I ever “ went in the direction of the monastery; and “ sometimes I have been so near it that the “ holy chaunt, raised in praise of the Being I “ was offending, has fallen heavily and reproach-

"fully upon my heart. But I would think of "Father Etienne — I would ponder on my "wrongs, and hatred would rankle in my soul. "The loud chorus then would seem to my "vexed ear as the sound of but one weak, and "tremulous, but well-known, and hated, voice; "and in the rich full harmony I would alone "distinguish the feeble tones from which I had "received my doom of deep despair.

"One evening, I had ventured so near the "monastery that I was obliged to hide myself "within the hollow of an aged oak, from a "young boy who was chopping fire-wood out-"side the porch. The bell rang for evening "service, and the boy left his occupation to "enter the monastery. Before I could retire "from my concealment he returned to the "gate, in the dress of an incense bearer. He "carried his own habit and hat, and threw "them on the ground within side of the porch, "then re-entered, and closed the gate. A "sudden impulse made me resolve to secure

" the clothes, and to attempt in them my " escape from the convent. Twilight assisted " my theft as well as my return; and I hid the " stolen habit in a dark corner of my cell.

" What was my design? Alas! I hardly " knew. I was ignorant of your abode—I " knew not where to go—but I thought, if I " could get at some distance from the forest " without pursuit, I might find help —perhaps " friends. At all events, I could beg my way " to Paris (I knew not the distance); there I " hoped to find you, or to hear of you. In " short, there was joy, there was hope, in the " vague thought of liberty; and I and hope " had for so long been strangers, that I " welcomed it in all its bright uncertainty, and " hugged it to my bosom.

" That night I left the convent. My heart " beat high with love and daring. I knew the " path that led directly through the forest. " Oh! that I had followed it — even had it led " me to instant death! Some dæmon suggested

" the thought of Father Etienne,—and I paused.
" A desire of vengeance, stronger than ever,
" crossed my mind, and I resolved to seek him,
" to upbraid him with his treachery; to show
" him that my mind had triumphed over the
" thraldom he had doomed it to; to tell him I
" still was yours, and that soon we should be
" together, never more to part. Oh, pride!
" blindness! madness! I blamed another, and
" I sealed my fate myself! Chance, or my
" cruel destiny, favoured my rash design. I
" reached the monastery as day began to dawn.
" The sun, that was so soon to shine upon a
" deed of horror, had not risen. Oh! that I
" had never seen again the glory of its beams!
" I entered the porch—with fatal eagerness I
" listened at the gate—alas! it was unfastened,
" and, yielding to the slight pressure of my
" body, it swung open, slowly, solemnly, and
" without noise, upon its massive hinges. The
" gate opened into the outer hall of the monastery,
" the deep gloom of which still resisted

"the light of the breaking day; but the "doors of the adjoining chapel were set wide "open, and there, alone, kneeling upon the "steps of the altar, with his hands crossed "upon his breast, and apparently lost in the "fervency of prayer—there was Father Etienne! "Every black passion took possession of my "soul. I gave myself no time for thought—"no moment for escape. I only recollected "my own deep anguish—his cruel falsehood: "his prayer appeared a mockery. Some logs "of fire-wood lay near me on the floor. I "seized one; and, moving with the quick "noiseless step of a murderer or a maniac, I "came behind the still kneeling Father. I "raised the deadly weapon with supernatural "strength—how can I proceed? Oh! the "aim was sure: it fell with fatal force upon the "bare head, silvered with age. His eyes "opened for a moment, ere he closed them for "ever. They rested upon his murderer: it "was a look of recognition, pity, and forgive-

" ness; and it has blasted every succeeding " hour of my existence!

" I rushed from the appalling scene. At " that early hour no one was abroad, and I " reached an unfrequented part of the forest " unobserved. I bathed my scorched temples " in a stream of water, and by degrees I re-" covered from the stupor which had precluded " feeling. As my ideas arranged themselves in " gradual order, a truth, a stubborn irresistible " truth, one that made my whole frame shudder, " and the blood curdle in my veins, — pre-" sented itself to my bewildered imagination. " Auguste! I was now unworthy of your love! " I had myself severed our fates for ever!

" Where now were all the joyous hopes, the " smiling visions, which so lately had caused my " heart to bound with the foretaste of recovered " happiness? What was the worst of the evils " I had already undergone, compared with the " agony, the desolation, I now began to endure? " I have sunk at last; and all is nearly closed.

" But I must finish my sad story. I returned " to the convent: I had scarce been missed, " and no question was made that could affect " me, although the fate of the Father was soon " known; and strange and fearful tales were " told concerning his death — all horrible, but " all false; and all less horrible than the dreadful truth. I still continued to shun all intercourse with my companions. I never slept, " I never rested; but still I lived; and the " struggle is still prolonged. Auguste! you " have gazed with passion on my beauty — you " have formed plans of happiness for our youth, " of honour for our age. You have thought " our fates should be linked together in peace " and innocence. Alas! my beauty is gone! " Even you, Auguste, you might look upon me " now, and no remaining line of former loveliness would tell you I am Adeline. I am " early old, worn out by grief and penance. I " am alone in the world; and, while, for your still " cherished sake, my crime must be unknown to

" others, you must learn to blush and tremble
" at my name, and strive to hide all traces of
" my once honoured memory!

" Oh! if such a wretch, so spotted, so spoiled
" by sin, might yet venture to prefer one prayer,
" and, in the few short intervals of her black
" despair, might dare to grasp at one fond
" image of her still too sanguine fancy, it would
" be this, — To fasten my eyes once more upon
" you, ere you know my guilt — to meet your
" look of love and kindness for one short moment — then close them in early, haply in
" expiatory, death, and leave my fate and history
" to the silence of your breast, and the indulgent pleadings of your love!"

One only further proof was wanting. Auguste obtained permission to examine the family vault of the late Baron de Chaudraye. A splendid coffin, marked as that of the unfortunate Adeline, was opened —— It was empty.

L.

THE FEASTE OF ALLE DEUILES.

AN ANCIENT BALLAD.

To such as are well read in the rare work of autobiography lately published by Sir Jonah Barrington, so singular will the coincidence appear between the relation he gives of the strange fate of Mr. Joseph Kelly and Mr. Peter Alley, in "My Brother's Hunting Lodge," and the catastrophe of the following tale, that, except for the doubtless authenticity of the first-mentioned narrative, it might almost be thought to have been founded on this ancient ballad, which bears evidence of having been written about the middle of the sixteenth century, by a person who was himself a witness of the event he celebrates. As it is, the two stories will probably be taken as equally true, and strongly confirmatory of each other.

A GOODLYE romaunte you shal heere, I wis,
'Tis ycleped of Alle Deuiles Halle,
Likewyse of the Feaste of Alle Deuiles it is,
And of what dyd there befalle.

For a pleasaunte thynge is this historye,
  And much delyte doe I
In one so straunge, yett so true perdie
  That noe man can ytt denye.

O the boarde is sett, and the guestes are mett
  To drinke in Alle Deuiles' Halle,
The guestes are drye, but the walles are wett,
  And the doores are barred on alle.

And why are the tables in ordere sett,
  And why is the wassaile spredd,
And why are they mett while the walles are wett
  To carouse o'er the uaultes of the dedd?

The Baronne of Hawkesdenne rose wyth the sunne
  On the daye of Alle Sayntes in the morne,
A terrible feate hee had thoughte uponne,
  And a terrible oathe he had sworne.

From holye Church full manie a roode
  Hee had ravishede of landys fayre,
And where Alle Saintes' Abbaye had latelye stoode
  Hys holde hee had builded there.

For to hym our good Kynge Harrye* had giuen
For hys fee that riche Abbaye,
When the Angels bequeathed for the seruice of heuen †
Were ta'en from the Church awaye.

Yett firmlye and well stoode the proude Chappell,
Though ne monk ne preeste was there,
Butt for festival nowe was hearde the bell
That wont to be hearde for prayere.

And those sayntelye walles of olde gray stone
Dyd witnesse foul revelrye,
And they shooke to heare theire echoes owne
Wordes of ribaulderie. ‡

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* "Good Kynge Harrye." — Henry the Eighth, whom the ordinary reader may, perhaps, not at once recognise under that epithet.

† "Angels." — Metalick currency, not spirits of another world.

‡ "Ribaulderie." A sort of converse much in use among the soldiers of the Pays des Ribauds; desultory troops under the command of the Duke of Burgundy in the holy wars.

See *Du Cange's Glossary.*

" Now builde mee a Halle," the Baronne sayde,
" And builde ytt both wide and high,
And builde ytt mee ouer the moulderinge dedde,
As they rotte in cemeterye.

" For longe haue I lacked a banquettinge Halle,
Meete for my feeres and me,
For our mirthe the olde Chappell is alle too smalle,
Soe our butterye-hatch ytt shal bee.

" Thys aunciente place I wyl newlye calle,
And christene ytt in goode wyne,
Thys Church of Alle Sayntes shall be Alle Deuiles' Halle,
And the daye, too, Alle Deuiles' and myne.

" On the firste of Nouembere thys lordeshippe fayre
My heritage was made,
From noe Saynte dydd I craue ytt by vowe or by prayere,
But I called to the Deuile for ayde.

"Longe, longe did I striue, and on hope I leaned,
And att courte I dyd uainlye toyle,
And hys Highnesse was harde, tyll I uowed to the fiende
A share in the Churche's spoyle.

"Nowe, onn thys daye beginneth a moneth of cloudes,
And of deedes that maye not bee forgiuen,
When the self-sleyne dedde looke upp from theire shroudes,
See no blew, and despaire of heuen.*

"And eache yeare thys festiuall daye wee wyl keepe,
Saynte nor angelle a place shal haue,
Butt darke spiritts wyth us shal carouse, pottle deepe,
And we'll welcome suche from the graue.

"O there wyll wee mocke the skulles belowe,
And we'll grinne more wyde than theye,

---

* "Que faut-il faire pour dissiper l'ennuie? C'est le mois "de Novembre. Il fait mauvais temps — temps de brouillards. "Que faut-il faire pour dissiper l'ennuie? Les Anglois se "pendent. Que faut-il faire, dis-je, pour dissiper l'ennuie? Il "faut boire du ponche!" — *Almanach des Gourmands.*

And we'll synge more loude thann the owletts doe,
And louder than preestes wolde praye.

"And our dogges wyth eache pate that is bleached and bare
Shal sporte them rounde and rounde,
Or tangle theire jaws in the drye dedde haire,
As theye route in the hollowe grounde.

"Att the wildered batte wee wyl loudlye laugh,
As hee flitts rounde hys mansyons olde,
And the earthe worme shal learne the redde wyne to quaff,
As he reeles in his slymie folde.

"We wyl barre oute the blessede lyghte fulle welle,
And we'll heare noe larke to disturbe us,
For the larke synges to heuen, butt wee to helle,
Noe hymninge fooles shal curbe us.

"A frend in our neede is indeede a frend,
And suche frend wus the Deuile to mee;
And thys halle I wyll builde, to thys dutyfulle ende,
That my cuppe fellowe hee maye bee."

O Nouembere is neare wyth the closinge yeare,
And the Halle is unfinishede quite,
And what liuinge menne dyd reare in the day, ytt dyd appeare
That dedde handes dyd undoe at nighte.

O the ceilinge and walles theye are rough and bare,
And the guestes theye are comynge nowe;
O how shal the Baronne feaste them there,
And how shal hee keepe hys vowe?

Att the builders he raued furiouslye,
Nor excuse wolde hee graunte att alle;
Butt, as one poore wretch low bent on hys knee,
He strake oute hys braynes wyth hys malle.

And, highe as hee raysed his bloudie hande,
Ryght fearfullie thus spake hee:
"Yff at eue thys halle unfinishede stande,
Not one knaue of yee liuinge shal bee!"

Thenn the builders theye playstered dilligentlye,
For lyfe or deth playstered theye,

And, a dagger's depthe, thicke coates three
  Theye had spredde on the walles that daye.

"Sore feare worketh welle!" quoth the proude Baronne,
  As he strode to the festall chayre,
And loude laughed the guestes to looke uponne
  The worke so smoothe and fayre.

The pine torches rounde a braue lighte dydd flynge,
  A redd noone through the darke nighte streaminge,
And smalle thoughte hadd the guestes of the wayn-scottinge
  Howe wett, and softe, and steaminge.

Nowe theye haue barred faste the doores belowe,
  And eke the windowes on highe;
And withoute stoode tremblinge the vassailes a rowe
  Att the bolde impietie.

O wee tremblede to heare theire reuelrie,
  (For I was there that nighte,)
A sabbath ytt seemede of Deuilrie,
  And of Witches att theyre delyte.

There was chauntinge thenne amayne, butt the pure and holie strayne
Of sweete musicke had loste ytt's feelinge,
And there was harpe and lute, but lyttel dyd ytt boote,
For the daunce was butt beastlie reelinge.

And the feates were ille tolde of chiualrye olde,
Amiddste dronkennesse and dinne,
And the softe laye of loue colde noe tendernesse moue
Ynn hartes of ryott and sinne.

Three nightes ytt endured, and the staringe owle
Was scared from hys ivye throne,
And the poor currs dismallie answered a howle
More senselesse thanne theyre own.

And dronker theye waxed, and dronker yett,
And each manne dyd uainly laboure,
By reasone of manie speakers, to gett
Meet audience from his neyboure.

These wordes thenn stammerede the loude Baronne,
“ Maye I ne'er quitt thys goode cheere,

"Tyll our maystere come to feaste wyth hys owne!"
And thatt was the laste wee colde heare.

The third morne rose fulle fayre, and the torches ruddye glare
Through the windowes streamed noe more,
And, when the smalle birde rose from hys chambere in the boughes,
The festiuall shout was o'er.

The smalle birde gaylye sunge, and the merrye larke uppe sprunge,
And the dewe droppe spangled the spraye,
And the blessede sunne, thatt stille shines the same on goode and ille,
Smyled thatt morne onn the olde Abbaye.

O longe dydd we listene, in doubte and feare,
Att thatt unholye doore,
And, ere wee essayed to entere there,
Ytt was fulle highe noone and more.

Butt stille colde wee gaine noe answere att alle,
Though wee asked continuallye;

And I that telle was the urchinne smalle
  That was thruste through the windowe to see.

O I hadde quayled in Saynte Quentin's fighte,
  Where I rode in that Baronne's trayne,
And hadde shrunke to see the slayne att nighte,
  As theye laye onn the bloudye playne.

I hadde sickennede to see eache pale face bare,
  And eache staringe glassie eye,
As the moone was dimmlye reflectede there,
  Farre from agreeablye.

Butt ne'er hadde I seene suche a syghte before
  As thatt whyche dydd thenn befalle,
Of grimme and ghastlye dedd heddes a score
  Mortared into a walle !

Theye were helde as theye dronkenlye backe dydd leane,
  Ynn deadlye payne and despayre,
And the redd wyne was clottede theire jawes betwene,
  And the mortare was growne to the hayre.

Full ofte haue I hearde thatt wyse menne doe saye
  "Manie heddes are bettere thanne one,"
Butt, O, thanne wyth suche gaunt heddes as theye
  Ytt were bettere to liue wyth none.

And stille the gaye fruites blushede on the boarde,
  As in scorne of the sadde arraye,
And the sparklinge flaggons, wyth wyne halfe stored,
  Beamed oute to the sunne alwaye.

Nowe Time hath rolled onne for three score yeare,
  And the olde walle standeth yett;
And, deepe, in rowes, rounde thatt dred chambere,
  Eache darke browne skulle is sett.

The ivye hath wreathede a coronett grene
  For the grimlye Baronne's browe;
And, where once the dais carpett flaunted shene,
  The ranke grass waveth nowe.

In the sockett where rowled eache dronken eye
  Hath the martlett builded her holde;
And, aye, midde the whyte teeth, gallantlye
  The walle flowere twisteth ytt's folde.

And, in place of the torches of pine-tree made,
The pale moone quivereth o'er themme,
And the scritch owle, wyth sorrye serenade,
Mocketh the mynstrell before themme.

And there muste they staye, tyll the dredful daye
When theire maystere claymeth hys dole!
O Gentles beeware of suche doome, and praye
Grammercye onne eache poore soule.

Butt, euermore, to your dyinge hower,
Remembere, whate'er befalle,
Keepe free your hartes from the foule fiende's power,
And your heddes from newe mortared-walle.

Thenne of Alle Deuiles' Daye thys the storye is,
And of Alle Deuiles' Halle lykewyse;
A wonderous tale, yett soe trewe ytt is,
That noe bodye it denyes.

G.

THE WITCH.

A TALE.

"Nowe, as touchinge wytches, conynge weomen, and the lyke, I closelye cherdge ye, (the quhilk I doute not indede ye houlde to be y$^{r\cdot}$ dutyes,) to make alle convenient diligence for y$^{e\cdot}$ better exfodiatinge and bringinge to lyghte soche leude and filthie deuilries of darknesse. Bot, mete yt is, for the more discretelye declaringe forth, and, as it wer, scentinge out, of the same, that ye sholde knowe they are of eighteene sortes and qualityes. Of the most manifest and ordinarye sorte ye sal be given to understond in quhat followeth hereupon."

Mayster Justiciarye Baldocke. Tractate of Wytches and other Papistryes — 1609.

Of the fruitfulness of this enquiry no one can doubt. — For my witch I must travel back, it is true, at least forty mortal years of my life; — a toilsome road, which, nevertheless, now, at seventy years old, I wish lay before me still in prospect, rather than behind me in memory.

But I think her worth the journey; for she was a very witch indeed.

My ancient school-fellow and friend, Mr. H., when a very young man, came into possession of a rather large estate in the north of England, as heir at law to an old solitary gentleman, of whose existence he had indeed been aware, but of the degree of whose relationship to himself he had been wholly ignorant. Mr. H. was already rich. Born to the expectation of a large fortune, and having very early inherited the same, he had never felt any incitement to exertion; and he was one of that large class who consider the prerogative of idleness to be among the most valuable gifts to be enjoyed by man. His habits and tastes confined him to London and its neighbourhood. At the time of which I am speaking, idle young gentlemen could not travel with the same luxurious despatch as now. Roads were bad, improvement still in its infancy, M'Adam in a go-cart, carriages awkward, highwaymen in plenty, and good inns scarce.

A journey, therefore, which any fool can now achieve with comfort in a few hours, was then a rather dangerous and toilsome undertaking of some days to the most considerate. Mr. H. would have given away the whole estate in question sooner than contemplate for a moment such a pilgrimage at an inclement season of the year. Nor was it in my power, at any season, to convince him of the folly he was guilty of, in never taking upon himself to look into his own affairs, and the alleged improvements, for which he was paying so largely; for his agent in the North was gradually encreasing his demands for repairs and other outgoings on the estate, up to the amount of the whole of the rents. Of this agent he knew nothing personally. He had found him in that character, on his first accession to the property — hereditary agent; and the former proprietor, an infirm old man, had for years left the place to the mercy of this stewardship. In short, I, who, without priding myself on my knowledge of business, fancied I understood it a little better than my friend, had suspicions that he was wofully plundered, and did all in my power to inspire him with like doubts. His constant answer was, "then, if so, why does the fellow plague me in all his letters to go and visit this out of the way place?" I own the agent's letters often conveyed a wish, faintly enough expressed, that Mr. H. would visit his property. But this advice was always prefaced by the most uninviting descriptions; and generally given at times when snow was on the ground, or recent rains had swelled the rivers, and rendered the roads nearly impassable, and when it required some strong motive to stir any man, especially a lazy man, from his fireside. I observed that, in summer time, the agent was invariably silent on this topick.

At last, an accident effected what my eloquence had always failed of. Disputes had arisen respecting my friend's right to this property on the part of sundry counter-claimants, styling themselves heirs at law to the deceased.

The usual consequence followed. What had lately been so entirely valueless in the eyes of Mr. H., while his title to it was unquestioned, suddenly became matter of infinite interest to him. He shook off his natural indolence, and set to work in good earnest to meet the claims of his opponents, with a determination to assert his right, and defend it to the last. I now felt it proper to give him advice of an opposite sort to that which I had so often given before; but with as little effect. I reminded him of the annoyance which the very mention of this estate had so long cost him; that it had long been a source of expense to him, and never of profit; and I entreated him to give way, upon even his just claim, if it should appear likely to cost him much of either trouble or money in the proving. No; he was resolved, even to his last shilling, to try the issue. But my apprehensions as to the difficulty of substantiating his title had been groundless. The attacks appeared to have been wantonly begun in a presumption upon Mr. H.'s well-known indolence of character; and they were easily defeated. Again he was left in undisputed possession of the manor of D.

In the course of this contest, many things occurred to arouse in Mr. H.'s mind the same suspicions which I had so long felt respecting the integrity of his unknown steward; and the success with which the contest had been crowned had given him not only a taste for the enquiry, but a spirit of industry to pursue it; and at length he proposed to me to accompany him on a visit to D. Too happy was I at his tardy inclination towards so reasonable a measure to thwart him by a refusal; and, accordingly, we were soon on our road to the North. He wished not to announce his intention, but to see men and things on his property unprepared for his arrival; to see all with his own eyes, and to judge of all with his own judgment. We travelled, therefore, under feigned names. In a few days we reached the little town of B., which was the nearest resting-place to D. manor; for, although there stood a capacious mansion on the estate, it had been described as uninhabitable, and as having been for many years shut up as an unfit and unsafe abode for any human creature.

It was about the middle of October when we started upon this expedition. We reached B. about the noon of the fourth day; fortunately for our enterprize, the agent was absent from the neighbourhood; and, having engaged rooms at the only publick-house which the place afforded, instead of sitting down to stare at each other across the small ricketty table on which, in due time, we were to dine, Mr. H. proposed that we should walk to the manor. We enquired our way of some persons in the street. "You will be clever to miss it," was the reply, as our informant pointed towards a flinty road which ran straight across an open flat country, leading, as far as the eye could reach, without tributary branch or impeding circumstance of any sort, to one object. And this object was the mansion at D., distant about four miles from the town. We walked towards it at a good pace, and, as we neared it, it did not indeed present an inviting aspect.

A story is told of Mr. ——, of gambling notoriety, that, on his first visit to a most unpicturesque part of the county of Waterford, he was asked by a friend at whose house he was staying, what he thought of the country. The country, though verdant, was flat and treeless, and no object was in sight but his friend's white cubick house with two rows of windows, and, at a short distance from it, a neighbour's house of the same shape and dimensions. "I like it of all things," said the old gambler; "it puts one in mind of throwing sixes on the green baize."——But D. manor was a flat without green, and the house was like sixes cast one on the top of the other. It was a high oblong, with nothing to break the bluff mass of masonry. The chimneys had fallen. The roof, like the face, was without break or excrescence; and of windows, all of one size and shape, four regular rows were to be counted.

Within half a mile of the mansion, the road turned abruptly into another direction, and we then had to walk over marshy ground, till we fell into a regularly trodden sheep-walk, which led close under the walls of the house. Nothing could be more dreary. Tree, or even shrub, there was none; not even a wild crab, with its sour golden fruit, tempting the wandering schoolboy to visit the spot, and sometimes to break its stillness with the gladsome notes of his voice or whistle. A few black leafless thorns, on which the torn spoils of the sheep's fleece here and there fluttered in the wind, stood at intervals among the thistles, to mark the lines of what had once been hedgerows.

But I was describing the mansion. The windows on the ground-floor, and the door, were bricked up, and, by the marks of time upon this work, it appeared that they had been so closed for many years. Broad lines of broken stones and mortar ran parallel with three sides of the house, showing that a wall which, from its remains, must have been high and thick, had once nearly surrounded the building. This was confirmed by the evidence of two ponderous gates of worked iron. They still maintained their station opposite to what had probably been the principal entrance; while the wall, which of old had embraced them on either side, now lay so low in its ruins by them, that a child of a year old might have crawled over any part of it. The huge bolt had long rusted in the lock, and docks and nettles had bound them with all their tangled might to the threshold, over which they had, time out of mind, been closed.

On the only side of the building which had formerly lain open was the deep bed of a large square pond. It was now entirely dry. Here, it appeared, the shepherds folded their flocks. At a short distance from this, and further from the mansion, was a broad dusty ditch, which once had served as an outside moat to this well-guarded place. Our crossing this ditch had already excited the wonder, perhaps displeasure, of the few inhabitants of some miserable hovels which clustered on the outside bank of it. These hovels belonged to the peasants who looked after the flocks; but seemed as little fit to shelter human beings as the poor creatures who issued from them seemed fit to represent humanity. Our arrival had occasioned a stir amongst them which was expressed by looks and gestures, the more particular meaning of which it was hard to comprehend. I never before saw a convention of such squalid, sickly looking beings. The scene on which we had before been gazing was so dispiriting, that we should have gladly turned to one of life and motion. But here life and motion, if they did form a contrast with stillness and solitude, formed but a melancholy one indeed. Poverty, want, the most abject, was stamped in traces too severely true upon their wasted careful visages. They were mostly women and children. Women? Alas for woman-kind, — that it ever can by penury and degradation be brought to look so! And the children — even they presented a melancholy picture. One looked in vain for the playful smile, and ruddy cheek of infancy, the rounded yet vigorous form, beautiful even in the bareness of its rags. All was blighted by the desolating genius of the ruined place.

We joined this wretched crew. We could collect but little of the subject of their half ideas expressed in their confused provincial jargon; but were given to understand that their men were at a distance, with the sheep, which at sunset they would bring home to fold in the place I have described. An old grey-headed shepherd, who sat on a stone at the door of one of the huts, and who, by gestures of more seeming cordiality, motioned us towards him, appeared to be the most reasonable and social of the group. He was bent double by age and infirmities. He bowed his head as we approached, and would have even risen to receive us. But we spared him so tedious and painful an exertion. He concluded us to have lost our way; for who but strayed strangers could be expected to visit such an abode? And he offered to send a child to guide us into the high road. But, when he understood that we desired a few particulars respecting the place, he was equally ready to satisfy our curiosity, — and, asking Mr. H. to seat himself on another large stone placed on the opposite side of the door of the hovel to that where he himself was established, he began his history in the simple but strong language of truth and feeling. Supported by the evidence of the surrounding scene, it formed one of the most striking pieces of natural eloquence I ever listened to.

I must give a mere abstract; for it was long. Far from suspecting who it was to whom his tale was addressed, the old man first spoke of the proprietor of the manor himself. Mr. H. made signs to me to be silent, and then, his face buried in his hands, sat to hear himself described as the cause of all the unhappiness and all the desolation he witnessed; as a hard landlord, and a bad man; as one who, insensible to all the woe he had created, and at a distance from it, was fattening on wealth extorted from the ill paid labour of those whose poverty fixed them to a spot where all those comforts were denied them which man has a right to claim from that fellow-man whom Providence has entrusted with the sacred duty of providing for his wants; as one, lastly, who had instructed his agent to harass and oppress beings who had in his estate an interest far older, more natural, and closer, than his own; and as one who caused the remonstrances and petitions of those who had none to help them to be punished as the outbreakings of insolence and mutiny. And the old man raised his withered hands, and almost sightless eyes, to Heaven, as he called upon that power which is present to listen to the poorest, and dreadful to judge the proudest, to lay its chastening hand on the selfish and cruel oppressor.

The prayer was already granted. My poor friend writhed in anguish. He felt, he magnified, the guilt of having so long delayed acting for himself, where he had the privilege and the duty of conferring happiness, and where he had recklessly inflicted so much suffering; and he recollected, with shame and remorse he recollected, that his presence even then had been the effect but of accident and caprice.

To relieve him, and to give another turn to the old shepherd's eloquence, I asked concerning the mansion. He said it had long been uninhabited and shut up. That he had never known it otherwise than as it now appeared;

and that he was the oldest inhabitant of those hovels now living — save one. That he had heard strange things of the mansion. That it must have known far different and better times; "when those gates," said he, pointing to them, "were gilded with gold, and never opened, as I've heard, to less than coaches and six. That was long, long, before my day. When I was a lad, and when many, now gone, were lads too, there we used to stand, as the boys do now o' days, on the brink of that ditch, hurling stones at the old gates. But never cared we to go any nigher. It *is* said, gentlemen, that the place is an awkward one to meddle with, and, perhaps, the less that 's said about it the better."

"What!" said I, — for I always had a dear fancy for a ghost; — "is it haunted?"

"God forgive us our idle talk," replied the old shepherd. "I had rather not say that, sir. But this I will be bold to say — all is not as should be about that window." "What window?" cried I and my friend at the same moment; and, with suitable action, we turned from the old man to look. There were many windows; all, as I have before said, alike in size and shape. And we turned again to the narrator. Pleased, as a man who, in whatever circumstances, believes that he has found, not one only, but two, attentive listeners to his oldest, his longest, and his favourite, story, he replied, with an expression that brightened even his sunken countenance, "What!—have you never heard of the window?"—"Never," we both answered. "Nor of the Witch?" said he, with increasing energy.—"Never."

The old shepherd chuckled with pleasure. He then set himself to recollect the story he had thus engaged for. But, as his mind journeyed back through years of hardship and of gloom, the dim lustre died upon his features, like the cold light of a wintry sunset, which has glistened for awhile upon a ruin, but soon leaves it again to the encreasing shadows of night, which it before so faintly and momentarily repelled.

This is the outline of what followed. That, when he was a boy, his father and mother would speak of the great house having been inhabited in their youth by a man and woman at that time far advanced in years and very infirm. No one then knew how long they had lived there, who had placed them there, or what they did there. They lived in the centre attick. This was known; for their tottering forms were occasionally seen through that window; and a light would often glide and glimmer there, and sometimes at very unseasonable hours of the night. It seems that, amongst these ignorant and unobservant people, (squalid, and miserable, and unfriended, and uneducated, then, as now,) some curiosity had been awakened concerning the old couple in the mansion. For, as time went on, the occasional appearance of the figures and of the lights had ceased; yet no one had marked precisely the period at which they had ceased to appear, and nothing had occurred to date the death or departure of either of these strange inmates. Yet it was clear that they, who were old in the days of the parents of the oldest now alive, must long ago have mingled their dust with that of the mouldering tenement in which they had so long and so strangely lived.

Had all traces of inhabitancy ceased in the mansion, the dwellers in the hovels would long ago have acquiesced in the conclusion that the old couple had quitted it unseen, or that their bones were bleaching in their attick; and the whole mysterious story would have been forgotten. But all traces of inhabitancy there had not ceased. Still one window of the old house, and only one, was regularly opened as soon as the first rays of the sun appeared above the horizon to make every object distinct and clear; and with the same regularity was it closed at sunset. And this, every morning and evening of the year, and year after year; whatever was the season, and whatever the weather. And this was the same window, the attick window, through which, of old, (it was traditionarily said,) the last human forms had been seen to glide and the light to glimmer. And still was the heavy casement set open to the dawn of each succeeding day — and still was it closed each night at sunset. Yet never could the hand be seen which performed this regular, but apparently unnecessary, ceremony. I say unnecessary, because the old casement was entirely destitute of glass, and must have admitted the weather as freely when closed as when set open to the utmost stretch of its rigid hinges. One thing only was certain — the old couple must long have been dead. Who then or what can open and shut that window?

Such was the tardy but irresistible reasoning of these poor creatures. The natural inference drawn by ignorant and superstitious minds, (and I say not this in scorn, for daily experience shows that one needs not be born in a hovel to draw such inferences,) was, that what was to them unintelligible must be, therefore, supernatural, and that Providence was going out of the ordinary lofty path of its wisdom and its goodness to show its power, by what?—"perplexing monarchs?"—No, but by frightening and annoying paupers, and their wives and children.

Soon the little community became agitated by those undefined and painful excitements which the wonderful and unexplained is sure to awaken. Various were the solutions which arose in men's minds, and some found their way, full four miles off, to the town of B. But, as is usual on these important occasions, the solutions became much too extravagant to deserve attention, and the really unexplained truth was lost or forgotten in a crowd of false wonders. Use reconciles us to most things, not to all. But all other feelings arising out of these things had subsided into a general one of awful reluctance to approach the old house. And this explains the surprise shown by the women and children upon our crossing of the dry ditch; for that ditch had long been the boundary beyond which it had been judged prudent never to proceed. The bed of the old pond being the only shelter for the sheep in winter-time, the practice of folding them there was, perforce, continued. But care was had that the sun should be well seen to rise, and the mysterious window to open, before the flocks should be released of a morning; and as regularly they were secured for the night before the sinking sun should disappear, and the closing window give token that the reign of powers beyond mortal reach had begun. These tasks were performed not by individuals, but by parties. One man alone would not have ventured; and often has a poor lamb been left to bleat, unfolded, and disregarded, if it happened to stray beyond the hour when it was safe for the more timorous animals on two legs to guide it to its home. The children were nursed in the fears of their parents. If a peeled stick, or round pebble, or any other such treasure from the magazine of their simple sports, chanced to fall into that ditch, there did it remain unredeemed among the other wastes and strays of many generations: and the most daring urchins, under the strongest impulse of mischief, was never seen to cross that bourn.

To this effect was the old shepherd's history of the house and the window. His history of the Witch was in this wise. One very ancient woman, the oldest inhabitant of those parts, had long dwelt alone, in a hovel which was distinguished from the others only by its being at a little distance from them, and upon the inner edge of the fearful ditch. All considered her able, if she were but willing, to tell many and strange things. Her own existence, indeed, was a mystery. None knew how she procured the means of supporting life. She had never been known to offer help or kindness to any one; there was not a human creature for whom she seemed to care. She never was known to ask help or kindness; for she seemed to think there was not a human creature who cared for her. She was the only one whom the reports about the window seemed never to concern or astonish; so she was believed to know all about it. She appeared but rarely on the outside of her wretched dwelling; when she did, her bearing remained unaltered, amid the alarm, the commotion, and the abuse, of her neighbours, and, strangest of all, she seemed ever as eager to avoid their company and observation as they were to keep at a secure distance from her. She was very old and very decrepit; she did not complain though she was very poor; but what settled the question of her being a witch was, that she lived alone on the side of the ditch which nobody else dared approach, and she had no fear. This was all the Shepherd had to say against her. But was it not enough?

By this time the sun was getting low, and we began to think of returning to our inn. Mr. H. took leave of the historian, promising to pay him another visit, and we walked slowly towards the town. When at a little distance from the mansion, we stopped to take another view of it. Our eyes rested mechanically on the mysterious window. The sun was now sinking fast; and — as the last narrow segment of its blood-red disk departed below the line of the horizon — the casement closed slowly but firmly, without any appearance of human agency to move or fix it!

Our looks met, and again instantly were withdrawn. I believe neither of us wished the other to observe the whimsical degree of solemnity with which the looks of both were impressed.

We walked quickly towards the road over the coarse long grass now wet with the heavy dew. The mansion at D. faced the east, and was backed by the short-lived glories of an autumnal twilight, lingering awhile in the quarter where the sun had set. The sky was full of leaden-coloured clouds, which showed like a distant range of mountains, capes, and bays, darkening with each passing minute, and becoming less distinct till land and sky seemed joined in one. One long narrow line of yellow light still marked the west, and against its bright light was still seen the outline of the huge oblong building. But soon even this light vanished; a fog rose around us; and we were heartily glad to reach our little inn.

Mr. H. continued silent and grave, a prey to the gloomy thoughts which all he had seen and heard that day served to inspire in a feeling and reflecting heart. He retired early to bed; and I was glad to follow his example.

The next morning we met, over the breakfast table, in a very different mood. The sun shone so gaily, it was impossible to be melancholy; and a fresh and frosty air invited to exercise. Mr. H. had settled all differences with his conscience before he slept; no hard matter with one who has sinned only from carelessness and in ignorance. He had promised himself large amends for his sufferings of the day before, in executing the good and kind resolutions he had formed; and now, contented with himself, and eager to give happiness to beings till then strangers to it, he was jealous of every moment he lost till we should return to D. Our walk was delightful. We knew that there were no beauties of scenery; we did not therefore regret the absence of what we did not look for. But the sky shone brightly on us, and the birds sang gladly, and my friend's terrier dog was our companion. He was just set at liberty, having been four days imprisoned in a post chaise, and then tied for a whole afternoon and night to the leg of a table at the inn; and he seemed to wish to communicate his joy, and he succeeded, as he ran and barked and snapped, in pursuit of the dry yellow leaves from the hedges, as the eddies of light wind bore them round and round in circles along the road. Even the ill-omened aspect of the old house failed to frown us into bad spirits; though there it stood in all its awful dulness, and the casement, which we had seen closed the preceding night, now again stood open as the day that beamed in glory upon it.

On reaching the abodes of the shepherds, we found that enough curiosity had been excited by our visit of the day before, and our promise to repeat it, to cause several of the men to remain at home to receive us. They suspected us, as we were afterwards informed, to be persons deputed by the agent to discover, if possible, new means of adding to the profits of the estate at their expense; and it was easy enough to perceive, in the sullen countenances of starving men, whose resentments, if not their wits, had been thus aroused, something that bespoke a spirit of ferocious resistance already swelling up against its barriers, and ready to break forth upon any further provocation. By minds which have been thoroughly debased to ignorance and wrong, every thing will be submitted to while aught can be gained, or saved, by submission. So it was with these poor creatures, who had, till then, bowed tamely beneath the rod, and had borne, without resistance, the extreme of insult, want, and oppression. But now, when patience and life must have sunk together under harder trials, they had become desperate. Nor was this feeling abated, when Mr. H., calling them about him, declared himself owner of the land on which they stood. His name had been too often used among them by his agent as ordering and approving his own acts of injustice, for his first appearance to inspire any other but feelings of fear and hatred. Not a hat was raised, and not an eye was turned upward upon him that did not speak savage anger. With great presence of mind he spoke aloud. "My friends, I come among you to judge for myself and for you. I only wish I had come sooner, for I see that you are in want of many comforts, and it shall be my study to make you happy. We will no longer be, as we have been, strangers to each other. I will, henceforward, live often among you, and you shall all have reason to rejoice that I have at last become acquainted with you and with your wants. That house is mine. It shall soon come down to the ground to make place for one that shall better suit a man who will live on his estate. I will now give a guinea to any one who will follow me and help me to examine it." All were silent. The men hung back irresolute. Not one offered to earn the tempting bribe. Suddenly there rose a murmur of surprise and dismay. The women caught up their screaming children, the men retired behind the women, and "the Witch! the Witch!" was heard echoed from mouth to mouth, as a very old woman, wrapped in a man's tattered great coat, approached, supporting with a crutch stick her slow and feeble steps. Mr. H., seeing the crowd retiring from around him, repeated his words; but without effect. They who, but a few minutes before, were meditating and muttering projects of outrage against one armed with the authority of a master, and supposed to be an oppressor, now quailed before, they knew not what, under the form of a helpless, palsied, old woman.

We were soon left alone with this remarkable person. She raised an old black hood, which shaded her face, surmounting the rest of her strange epicene attire, and she gazed intently upon Mr. H. At length, in a voice cracked with age, and hoarse with strong and stern energy, she thus bespoke him: "Sir, — I heard your offer, — I accept it. — Such as I am, will you go with me?"

Something, as much in the old woman's eyes as in her tone of voice and manner of accepting the challenge, for a moment confounded my friend, and he appeared irresolute what to do. Taking it for granted, however, that the poor creature's show of zeal and spirit was but the effect of the proffered bribe, he told her kindly that he would take her good-will for the deed, and, excusing her a fatigue to which she was so unequal, would give her the guinea.

She drew up her withered frame, till, in spite of its infirmities, for a moment she stood almost erect. She pushed aside, with indignation, the hand which held the money, and, raising her voice to a pitch at which she seemed to have cast off all the weakness of age, and to have gathered at once eloquence and power from the dignity and passion of her feelings, "I will," she said, "be true to my word. My word has been given to others as well as to you, and I never yet broke faith with created man. Keep you your promise as I will be true to mine. Give me the gold when I shall have earned it—Sir:" (and, with an action of strange and forcible meaning, she struck her crutch repeatedly on the ground as she uttered these last words) "I am old, poor, wretched, hated, feared, perhaps *to be* feared if provoked, but *I* only can, or dare, go with you where you wish to go,—and I *will* go with you!"

There was that in her words and mien that filled us with astonishment. We knew not whether to think her deranged in her wits. But it was plain she would not be refused, and there was enough in what we remembered of the old shepherd's story to make us think her at least worth attending to, as a companion, if not as a guide, in our progress. She moved towards the mansion. Mr. H. followed her, and I, of course, followed him.

When we were close under the walls, a question arose how we were to enter. The brick-work, which blocked all entrance below, being as substantial as the walls themselves, the nearest practicable opening was through a window of the first floor. But the whole neighbourhood could not furnish a ladder. We stood irresolute, while the old woman watched us shrewdly. I began to advise desisting from the enterprise that day, and returning on the morrow with better means, and with workmen, from the town. But, my friend, and the old woman, were now not in a temper of mind to be daunted with difficulties. She pointed to the mixed masses of bricks and stones which lay near us, and asked if we could not make a heap high enough to enable us from its top to break an entrance, and even pointed to one window that appeared to be in a more shattered state than the rest. Mr. H., ashamed of finding himself surpassed in energy and invention by his feeble companion, set to work, without loss of time, to move to the spot the materials for his crazy mount. I assisted, while the old woman was eagerly and impatiently observing our progress.

We had soon raised a pile of rubbish sufficiently high, and, after standing on it together to try its power of supporting us in our effort, I helped Mr. H. to place himself on the broad window-sill. The iron work was deeply worn with rust, and the leaden bars which joined the small squares of broken dingy glass had, many of them, already yielded to the visitings of the wind, and remained bound together by little more than thickly matted cobwebs and hardened dust. He soon made good his entrance into the room, having cautiously tried the strength of the floor, and then invited me to follow. But the old woman had already ascended the pile on which I stood, and impatiently called upon me to aid her to reach the window. This, with Mr. H.'s help from above us, was not difficult to effect, and she was soon safely by his side. But my exertions to place her there, without injury to her frail and decrepit frame, had caused great disturbance in our works below. They had given way, and I was now lower by some feet than I had been at first. Neither had I any one to lend a hand to my ascent. After witnessing some ineffectual and hopeless struggles of mine at an impracticable escalade, Mr. H. laughed heartily at my discomfiture. I fancied that the old woman enjoyed it too, and that a very peculiar look of malicious satisfaction darted from her wild eyes, as Mr. H. and she turned to leave the window, without waiting for the elaborate process that I had again undertaken, but singly now, of rebuilding the pile, from which stones had rolled down too large for one man's strength to replace.

Still I continued my work. But the foundations were now loosened, and the masses that I was able to bring had neither breadth nor weight to support themselves or each other against the wall. In this disheartening labour I persevered for some time, occasionally going to some distance from the face of the house for materials. On my return from one of these trips I became aware of a very strong and overpowering smell of smoke. I judged that some weeds were burning in the nearest fields, and, the symptoms encreasing, and the utter hopelessness of my project. of following my companions through that window being now evident, I proceeded to reconnoitre another side of the house. Here I was met by a stronger and more stifling smell, and a still thicker smoke, and I returned to my old quarters. By this time I perceived small wreaths of smoke issuing from several crevices in the lower parts of the mansion. I was now very much alarmed, and, running towards the window by which my friend and the old woman had entered, I called loudly to apprize them of the strange, and unaccountable, but very plainly imminent, danger. The house had certainly caught fire; and it seemed to spread with astonishing rapidity, and on all sides. Soon a thin white vapour began to appear from the upper windows, as it had at first done from the ground-floor, while through the chinks below a red flash was here and there indistinctly visible, like flames through a thunder-cloud, adding its horrors to the black billowy volumes that now rolled within; and a faint crackling sound at intervals told the quick advances of the conflagration. I ran round the house, almost frantick with my fears for my friend. I returned to the window. No one appeared, and I knew not how to act. In vain I again betook myself to my desperate and impotent efforts to reach the opening. I only displaced still more the heap, and was thereby adding to the difficulties he would find in his decent, if, by Heaven's mercy, he should again reach the spot where I had last seen him. Not a soul from the hovels would come to my assistance. I shouted, I gesticulated, I believe I knelt; but all in vain. A little crowd had assembled on the further edge of the dry ditch, to gaze at the sight in stupid wonder. But no signs, no entreaties, no threats, (for I threatened them all with the gibbet for petty treason, as accessories in the murder of their lord, — fear like necessity hath no law,—) nothing could induce one of them to approach, and I dreaded to quit my post lest my aid might be wanted there before I could return.

I knew and recollected with sad foreboding the generous kindness of my friend's nature, and it was with dismay I thought of the infirmities of his companion, for I knew he would not desert her. And how was she to second any effort he could make for her safety? An active man, with only his own life to provide for, might, by a desperate spring, and at the expence of, perhaps, the fracture of a limb or two, save it at once. But, clogged as he was with the fortunes of that unlucky old creature, every thing was to be feared for him. In alarm, as in wrath, it is consolatory to find some victim to accuse; and I was unjust enough to vent a hundred imprecations against that helpless being. I could scarcely breathe, from agitation and from the suffocation occasioned by the smoke and the black dust which fell thick around me. At length, with feelings of extacy proportioned to the horrors I had endured, I perceived the forms of both Mr. H. and the old woman at the window which I had been so long and eagerly watching. Not an instant was to be lost in doing all that was practicable to extricate them from a situation of rapidly increasing peril. Mr. H. was unwilling to attempt his own descent till he should have secured that of the old woman. But this it was impossible to accomplish without causing a severe fall. She too, as is not unusual in such a dilemma, seemed to dread this slight danger more than the dreadful one that raged so near her; and she refused to stir. She bade Mr. H., however, strip off his coat, and, applying her whole force, she held on by one sleeve doubled over the window-sill, while, by the opposite end of the hanging garment, he lowered himself from the window sufficiently to be able to drop the remainder of the distance without material injury; and, I standing with my back to the wall to break his fall, we only rolled together, unhurt, among the stones and rubbish. Our next work was instantly to set about raising the heap, by piling upon it large blocks and masses, such as only the joint strength of two men could raise. At last, after great and rapid toil, we were enabled, one standing on the summit, and the other on his shoulders, very nearly to reach the sill. We then earnestly called on her to trust herself to the upheld hands which were stretched to receive her. Had she been young and beautiful we could not have longed with more ardour to feel the descending weight of that precious burthen. But now, — madness, sheer madness, it seemed, — she sat on the edge of the window, still hesitating, objecting to the means offered to her of rescue from a certain, instant, and dreadful death. And, while Mr. H., whom I had raised on my shoulders, was actually endeavouring to climb up once more to where she was, to force her from the approaching fate of which she seemed unconscious or heedless, a sheet of fire burst out behind and around her. She threw her arms up wildly,

"Like a scribbled form, drawn with a pen
Upon a parchment; and against this fire
Did she shrink up." SHAKSPEARE. *K. John.*

Then, with a cry of pain, mingled with a yet louder laugh of something like exultation, she fell, or rather flung herself, backward into the flames!

At the same dreadful moment a loud crash was heard within. We both dropped from the heap, and ran unconsciously from the building, gasping for breath.

All time for exertion, or for hope, — all was over! The crash had been occasioned by the falling in of floors and ceilings, and, for some moments, the building itself could scarcely be distinguished through the thick masses of smoke mingled with dust, and the showers of sparks, and then jets of pure flame, which followed. At intervals the blaze seemed to receive a check from the weight of beams, parting walls, &c. falling in from aloft with tremendous noise. But it was only to burst out again with a fury on which the eye could scarcely bear to gaze. After a time, it raged almost without check or hinderance, and the old mansion showed like a huge furnace, all within glowing and roaring with a white heat, sometimes a waving upward tongue of flame, and the whole canopied by a rolling shrowd of smoke, which settled into a dark cloud high in the midst of the still bright atmosphere. A scene appalling even in recollection, but of strange magnificence and beauty.

Besides the impression of deep melancholy produced by the frightful spectacle we had just witnessed, we felt that we had become in some sort publickly answerable for the life of a fellow-creature. We thought it prudent at once to hasten to B., and tell our own story, before it should be told for us with all the imperfections and all the additions inseparable from any story to be narrated by such historians as those who had been the distant spectators of our enterprize and its result. People too were now flocking from all the neighbouring parts, attracted by the conflagration, which must have been seen for many miles round that flat country.

As soon as we reached our inn, we despatched the landlord in quest of a few of the most respectable inhabitants of the town, among whom was a magistrate, entreating their attendance on a matter of public importance. Four or five gentlemen soon joined us. Mr. H., in their presence, declared his name and purpose in coming to B., and then detailed all that had passed, concluding with the disastrous fate of the poor woman. His declaration was taken in writing, and signed. I must here mention the few particulars to which I was not witness, which occurred during the brief period when Mr. H. and his companion were within the mansion at D., as related by himself. They began by passing across several small square chambers, and along some narrow crooked passages; the dim windows admitting so scanty a light, and the floors being so much broken, that they were obliged to proceed very cautiously. Slowly as he went, however, his companion seemed hardly able to follow him. She complained much of fatigue. She seemed quite as much perplexed as he to find a way in the house through which she had offered herself to be his guide, and much more intent on finding a place to sit down and rest than on the performance of what she had undertaken. More than once, he had lost sight of her for several minutes at a time, and was fain to return to look after her. At length, they reached together a chamber, in the centre of the edifice, much larger and higher than the others, but, like them, encumbered with the dust and rubbish of a century or more. The floor of this room was so decayed and dangerous that Mr. H. would scarcely have ventured upon it, but that he was tempted forward by seeing, nearly in the middle of it, a large square opening. This gave upon a flight of broken stone steps, which he descended, in the belief that they would lead to the rooms on the ground-floor which had been so carefully closed, from without, with brick-work. It was in descending this stair that he was suddenly met by so dense a smoke that he was obliged to retreat. And soon the smell began to be so oppressive, and the smoke to issue through so many parts of the rotten flooring, that he was convinced that some of the lower apartments were on fire, and burning rapidly. Had he been alone, the strange coincidence of such a circumstance, occurring within the first half hour of his first entrance into his own house, might have tempted him to investigate further. But fear for the safety of the feeble partner of his adventure overcame his curiosity, and he urged her to retire with her best speed. But fear seemed, in her, to have conquered for awhile all natural infirmities, and she showed not only an activity of body, but a sagacity and power of resource, that astonished him. She had made herself mistress of every turn of the rather intricate progress they had made through the house, and now guided him back rapidly, with confidence, and unerringly. It was only when her own immediate safety remained to be provided for, and at the last moment, that the poor wretch seemed to lose her senses. I have already detailed that dreadful crisis, and I do not wish to dwell upon it again.

The result of our consultation with the gentlemen was an agreement that they should accompany us, next morning, to D. manor. Mr. H. was, more than ever, anxious to begin the works of justice and kindness which these events had so unexpectedly broken in upon. Accordingly, in the morning, we set forth, attended by several more persons than we had looked for. Curiosity was excited, and several recruits voluntarily joined our party. Many parts of the exterior of the huge building had fallen during the night. It was now a misshapen and blackened ruin; still smoking, and here and there the fire creeping still through its glowing hollows.

Little groups of the natives were gazing and gaping around; but a closer and larger crowd had assembled on the extreme edge of the broad ditch which separated them from the hovel of the poor old woman. Our arrival caused some sensation, and a few of the men, and more of the women, approached Mr. H. with a petition to tear down what had so lately been the residence of her whom they had so long hated and feared. Mr. H. was not unwilling to do a popular act at so cheap a rate. "But first," said he, "I will enter it. For if the poor woman had any property, it would be a pity it should be damaged. And I understand she had means of living which none of you could guess at." Without waiting for an answer, but taking, as in some cases it is very wise to do, consent for granted, he advanced towards the ill-omened tenement. It had never before, within the memory of living mortal, been so closely reconnoitred. Window or chimney it had none. But an opening in the roof, whose form left it doubtful whether it was the effect of design or of decay, served the double purpose of an entrance for light from without and a vent for smoke from within. The door was fastened, and at first resisted the united strength of Mr. H. and myself, till, our efforts being redoubled, the old wood-work gave way, and burst from the strong iron bolts that had caused the opposition. It fell in fragments and yielded us an abrupt entrance into the miserable dwelling. Good heavens! How were we confounded! In a large stone chair, which occupied the centre of the place, there sat the old woman herself! Alive, but wretchedly scorched and wounded. Her withered hands clenched in anger and pain; and her wild eyes casting a glance of impatient remonstrance which accorded well with the querulous tone in which she muttered a few words, in themselves too unimportant to record, but which, under all the circumstances in which they were spoken, I never can forget. The last moments of her mysterious existence were numbered. Our surprise had been marked of the people without. The cause of it was soon known.

And now began a painful strife indeed. The most ungenerous and savage passions of our nature are those, alas! which are communicated the quickest; and quickly above all do they travel among minds which, like those of the poor population of D., have never, by education or by benefits received, been soothed down to emotions of forgiveness or pity. Among them, rage mastered even their servile sense of inferiority. They forgot even the presence of Mr. H. their landlord. They pressed rudely forward, declaring that they would come at the object of their fury, now that all her supposed powers of mischief and defence were in dissolution. They determined that her having escaped the fire was evidence, strong as holy writ, of all they had before believed of her; and they resolved now to haul her, dying as she was, to the nearest pond, to try if she were likewise proof against drowning. We had no door to oppose to these wretches. But, with the assistance of the gentlemen who were with us, we formed a circle round the unhappy victim, standing shoulder to shoulder to face the assailants. Thus repulsed, the mob set about the work of demolition, and we soon saw the mud-walls fall in fragments round us. The full glare of open day broke in, for the first time for many years, upon that abode of twilight and mystery. The unusual sight seemed for a moment to affect the almost insensible being by whom we stood. She stared fearfully around, and at once took in a full and piteous sense of her danger. She drew her wasted form into a corner of her great stone chair. She caught our hands, and grappled them with an expression of imploring helplessness. She seemed to know our purpose was to protect her from those fellow-creatures who had been born and bred in the neighbourhood with her, and, by a few faint gestures and disconnected words, she gave us to understand that our wish that the last struggle of her poor life were past could not be greater than her's to quit a world of misery, in which all that now remained to her was the dreadful and immediate prospect of a violent end. We could not much longer have maintained our post. The yells of the mob became every instant louder and more portentous; and now an attack was commenced upon us by the hurling of fragments of the broken mud-walls, the assailants approaching nearer and nearer after each volley. Mr. H. and I again turned to the dying woman. She appeared to suffer no more. She was regardless now equally of our attentions and of the assaults of the mob, or answered them by low moanings, rather of weakness than of apprehension or of pain. Her eyes were resting fixedly on the dark ruins of the mansion which stood in the distance high over the levelled walls of her cottage, and gradually something of a serene and satisfied smile took possession of her features. Suddenly, with a violent rush, the mob overbore us. They clustered round and over the stone chair, and Mr. H. and I found ourselves pinioned each by a couple of ruffians. We exclaimed, we struggled, in vain: we looked for the last time on the object of our solicitude. Heaven was kind to her in her utmost need. One convulsive sob, — and all was over. — She had escaped the hands of men. — Her lifeless form alone remained to gratify their fiendish but impotent rage.

Soon after these events, my fate called me to a great distance from my country, and from the friends of my youth. While abroad, I settled; — as the world has it when a man marries. But, my marriage bringing after it the cares of a numerous progeny, I became the most unsettled man alive. I wandered wherever I could find lucrative employment. I spent some time in India, and, from my first leaving my native land, I did not return for near thirty years. When I did return, my first care was to seek out the closest friend of my early life. An uninterrupted correspondence with Mr. H. had continued him in my mind as he was when we parted in our youth. But he had become a comfortable, corpulent, bald, country gentleman, a farmer on a large scale in every sense of the term, and a justice of the peace; eagerly pursuing improvements and experiments, and retaliating my foreign wonders with descriptions of his own agricultural discoveries at home.

He asked me one day as we sat together in a coffee-house in London, whether I remembered the journey we had once made in our youth to that formidable estate of his in the North. Could I ever forget it? He seemed pleased with the vivid recollection I retained of the place, and of all the circumstances belonging to it. I enquired what he had done towards improving it, and I soon found myself engaged to accompany him, for the second time, to the manor. It was arranged that we should pass one day at the house of a relation of his, which lay in our way to his own property, and at no great distance from it. Many, many years had been added to our ages. We were altered men in every respect but in our friendship for each other. That was the same, and our pleasure in each other's society undiminished. It was a delightful journey. England, my old England, in her neat garment of green fields and clipped hedges, with the little varieties of solitary gentlemen's solitary seats, peaceful towns, hills without bandits, and jungles without wild boars or tigers. My country was fresh to me; but her features were familiar as those of the consoling genius of many a home-sick dream.

Much as I was pleased with every inch of the way, I was most gratified when we reached what Mr. H. announced to me as his relation's residence. And not a little glad was I to think we should spend at least twenty-four hours at that sweet spot before proceeding to renew the melancholy recollections of D. manor. Here, at our resting-place, all was gay and smiling. Thriving plantations, waving corn-fields, meadows of rich green, — all was to my taste and liking. Mr. H. saw the pleasure I derived from the scene, and proposed our walking by a shorter road to the house through the plantations. We did so, our servants going round with the carriage to announce our arrival. At last, after a charming walk, we came in sight of the house. I was eager to see if its appearance corresponded with the gaiety and tastefulness of all the rest. It soon answered for itself, and confirmed my satisfaction. "You like this place?" said my friend. I turned to answer him, — and the secret was divulged by his glistening eye and by the kind pressure of his hand, as he welcomed me to his own happy home — the manor of D. Such it was; and, after the first few moments of keen surprise and incredulity, (for an Englishman, when convicted of being dull of apprehension, generally thinks it right to console himself for a short time by being also hard of belief,) I began, under Mr. H.'s guidance, to trace the principal and most repelling features of D. manor in those which were to be the most admired of this new creation.

“ Look,” said he, as he pointed towards the house, “ look well at it, and you will see it is built upon the very site of the old mansion. The conservatory in front of it extends exactly to where the old iron gates stood when you were here last. And the flower-garden, which now looks so gay and gaudy, and is edged by that little light paling, fills the space which was once enclosed by the wall whose ruins you remember but too well. Behind the house, I will soon show you a fair little lake; and you must endeavour to spy through its clear still waters the formal edges of the deep dry pond. Now survey that little brook into which I have drained the marsh, and over which you see that rustick bridge with the ivy and china roses, and tell me if it take not the exact line, still serpentining here and there, of the awful moat which lay betwixt the original mansion and the hovels of the shepherds. I never will own that a village need be hid by artful plottings and plantings, if the cottages be such as it behoves a rich man to provide for the lodgement of those who look to him for the recompense of honest service. That cheerful little village, to the right of the bridge, stands in the place of the wretched hovels, but gives a better shelter to some of the very persons whom I found on that ground. They were all taken care of. Many, most, are since gone, — I hope, to a still better home. But their children are their successors; and in those healthy urchins, who are playing on the lawn, and whose voices sound so joyously, you see many of their grand-children. There is one spot more that will interest you, and which I see your eye is seeking. Yes,—you are right; — that little evergreen clump marks the spot where the poor old woman's hovel stood. Let us go there. You will still find her stone chair. It is big enough for both of us. And I will there tell you more about the window and the witch."

" More than ten years after those events," continued my friend, when we had taken our seat in the centre of what once was the witch's cottage, " I received a letter from the governor of the jail at W——, informing me that a man, who was under sentence of death for coining, earnestly desired to see me. I hastened to W——, and saw the convict. He was somewhat advanced in years, and I certainly did not remember to have ever seen him before. By his desire, we were left alone together. With an expression of respectful earnestness, he took my hand between both of his, squeezed it, and, after gazing for some moments on my face in silence, burst into tears.

Naturally referring these emotions to the deplorable condition in which the poor fellow stood, I asked him how I could serve him, and why he sent for me. " You cannot serve me, sir, —" he answered firmly; " I am guilty and must suffer. But I wished to see you, that you might receive a poor disgraced, dying, man's thanks. Sir, I thank you with all my heart." And his eyes again filled with tears. " You were kind to my mother in her last agony, and you saved her from the cruelty of those who, but for you, would have murdered her." — " The witch's son ! " exclaimed I, most inadvertently ;—had I thought twice, such words would not have passed my lips. The softened, penitential, expression of the man's features in a moment changed to one of wild and stubborn pride. It was one which, alone, would have gone far to establish the kindred.

" I am," replied he, " son to an unfortunate woman who never did harm to mortal; who made a promise before the Almighty to three guilty sons: — and she kept it; — she sacrificed her life to save their's. She had suffered much and long, sir, for that promise. The poor ignorant wretches of your once-neglected village did brand, and abuse, and nickname her for what they did not and could not understand." I interrupted him — I do not know that in the course of my life I have been much in the habit of making apologies. But this I am sure of, that never was there a more hearty apology given in so few words for a hasty phrase than that in which I made reparation to the poor convict, before whose high and kindling feelings I stood abashed. His countenance, his tone, his heart, were again subdued, and he entered into a detail of which these are the particulars.

He could tell nothing of this old mansion further back than when it was known to be inhabited by the old couple of whom the shepherd had told us. Their son lived there with them, but in careful concealment, for, within its protecting walls, he carried on, in connexion with a widely-spread gang, the dangerous trade of coining false money. He had an only daughter, who, almost from her infancy, had been partner in his practices, but whose mother had always continued to inhabit the hovel, on whose site we are now sitting. This daughter became the wife of one of her father's associates, by whom she had three sons. Her father and husband dwelt, often for weeks together, in the mansion, carrying on their business on the ground-floor, which, you remember, was carefully bricked up. They would sometimes separate, and go to a great distance, and then meet again at the old house, which they entered at night by means of a passage under ground from this spot. By the same passage, food was carried into the house, and the proceeds of their trade found their way out. The poor woman, in her turn, waxed old, and her three sons naturally succeeded to their grandfather's and father's mode of life. Her occasional departures from the hovel, no one knew whither or by what way, and her solitary and mysterious existence, may sufficiently account for the conclusions come to concerning her.

The mystery of the window was very simple. The casement of the room occupied by the original couple had been for so many years, during their lifetime, opened and shut every day, that, when they died, it became the care of the survivors to continue that practice, in order that no apparent change should attract curiosity to the place. The same process, therefore, was daily observed, only effected by the simple machinery of cords passed through the rotten boarding of the floors, to obviate the necessity of the appearance of new figures at the window. Soon all enquiry and all wonder subsided into the tranquillity of a superstitious belief. But for the purpose of the opening and shutting of the window, each day regularly, at sunrise and at sunset, did the old woman visit the mansion by the passage already described.

But these precautions were not all.—Life was at stake; and the sons had taken care to place the means for instantly setting fire to the house, if at any time it should appear to their mother necessary to do so, in order to prevent a search. Trains of gunpowder were laid from several parts, communicating with heaps of dry shavings and other combustibles, so that she might, entering the building on any side, in a very short time set the whole in a blaze. This last resource was also to serve for giving notice to her sons, one of whom, during their absences from the mansion, was always in the neighbourhood. The house on fire, or in ruins, was to be the signal for them to fly, and never to return.

During the performance of this act, the strong and excited feelings of the old woman gave no place to fear. She was doing what she deemed a great duty;—one that she had passed her word solemnly, to do truly, in case of need;—and on the success of which depended the safety of the beings who formed the only link between her and the affairs and affections of life. That work done, perhaps her mind may have failed her; perhaps it may have misgiven her that the work was imperfectly done. Whatever caused her to hesitate, when we proposed to her to escape with us, it is probable that, at last, hurt to death, she made her retreat to the hovel through the passage which she knew so well.

The condemned coiner ended his narrative in these words, " When we lost the old house, we had no longer a place in which to pursue our business safely. We loved it, and we had loved our mother too, as we had reason to do, dearly,—dearly, Sir. Nothing, after, went well with us. My brothers were detected at the old trade. One suffered death by the law, and the other, as I heard, died on his passage to Botany Bay. I was left alone, little caring what became of me. I had a longing to see my native place again. I saw you there, Sir. I heard speak of the protection you had yourself given to my mother in her dying moments."

"Now I am settling my last account with this world, Sir," said he, and his voice assumed a strange tone, — and his eye gleamed with a strange expression, — and his hand shook as he drew something from his bosom, —" will you keep this, Sir? I have no one on earth I care for, or that can care for it but you, but it may remind you at least of an act of benevolence and charity to one who, whatever may have been her faults, did not fear to die in preserving the life of those whom she had brought into the world. Sir," added he, in a whisper, "I should not like *this* to fall into the hands of a hangman."

It was a piece of black silk sewed carefully up all round. It contained one thin lock of white hair.

L. G.

THE OLD SOLDIER.

I HAVE often occasion to pass through a village on the St. Alban's road, at one end of which there is so tidy and convenient a publick house, that I always give my horse his bait there, if I happen to be travelling in my gig. I had frequently observed an old soldier, who, having lost an eye, a leg, and an arm in the service of his country, had pretty well earned the privilege of idling away the rest of his life, in a manner particularly congenial with the habits of one of his calling. He would sit on a bench outside the door of this inn, with a pipe in his mouth, and a can of beer by his side; and thus he would pass all the fine months of the year. In winter he merely changed his seat: he was constant to his pipe and his can; he took both with him to the warm chimney-corner; and thus he enjoyed his out-pension. During the hour of baiting I have often talked with this old man. He had served last in the early part of the war on the Peninsula. He was loquacious enough on other subjects; but, if one questioned him concerning these last military services, he became on the instant morose and uncommunicative, and one could not but perceive that the topick was disagreeable and painful to him.

What most interested me about this man, was his love for young children. He was generally surrounded by a parcel of curly-headed urchins; and often have I seen the mistress of the little inn consign her infant to the protection of his one arm, when, by an arrival, she has been called upon to attend to the business of the house. The old fellow never appeared so contented as when thus employed. His pipe was laid aside, his beer forgotten, and he would only think of amusing and caressing his charge, or of lulling it to sleep. The bigger children would cluster round him, clamber over him, empty his pipe, upset his can, take all sorts of liberties with him, yet never meet with a rebuke. At times, however, he would appear lost in uneasy thought, gazing with earnestness upon the features of the sleeping infant, while tears would course each other down his cheeks.

As I drove one morning up to the door of the inn, and passed the bench on which the old soldier was, as usual, sitting, with his little flock of children playing round him, one of them, a very young one, suddenly backed into the road, and in another moment more would have been crushed; but the old man sprang forward; with a vigorous and wonderful effort he seized the child with his only arm, and threw it several feet out of the way of danger. He fell with the exertion, and was among my horse's feet. In suddenly drawing up, I had unwittingly done my very worst by the poor fellow; for I had caused the animal to trample upon him a second time, and a wheel had likewise passed over his body.

He was taken up insensible: we carried him to a bed, and after a little time he recovered his recollection. But he was so severely injured, that we feared every moment would be his last. The first words he uttered were, "The child! the child!" We assured him that the child was safe; but he would not believe us, and it became necessary to send into the village to search for the little creature, who had been hurried home with the others upon the confusion that the accident had occasioned. He continued to call for the child, and was in the greatest distress of mind till we had found it, and had taken it to him as he lay. His delight at seeing it alive and unhurt was intense; he wept, he laughed, he hugged it to his bosom, and it was not till he grew very faint and weary, that he would suffer us to remove it.

A surgeon arrived, and pronounced that the poor man was so much hurt, inwardly as well as outwardly, that nothing could be done to save him; and desired us merely to give him cordials or cooling drink, as he should appear to wish for either. He lingered for a few days.

I had been the cause, although innocently, of the poor fellow's death: of course I took care that all was done that could alleviate his sufferings; and, as long as he lasted, I went every day to pass a few hours by his bedside. The rescued child, too, was brought to him each day, by his own desire. From the moment he had first ascertained that it was unhurt, he had been calm and contented. He knew he was dying, but he could part with life without regret; and the cloud, which I had so often observed upon his weather-beaten countenance before the accident, never after returned.

The day before he died, as I was watching alone by his side, he asked me for a cordial. Soon after he had swallowed it, he laid his hand upon my arm, and said,—"Sir, if you will not think it too great a trouble to listen to an old man's talk, I think it will ease my mind to say a few words to you." He was of course encouraged to proceed. "I die contented," he continued; "happier than I have for some years lived. I have had a load upon my heart, which is not quite removed, but it is a great deal lightened. I have been the means, under Providence, of saving a young child's life. If I have strength to tell you what I wish, Sir, you will understand the joy that blessed thought has brought to my heart."

I gave him another cordial, and he spoke as follows: —

"It was in a stirring time of the Duke of "Wellington's wars, after the French had "retreated through Portugal, and Badajos had "fallen, and we had driven them fairly over "the Spanish frontier, the light division was "ordered on a few of their long leagues fur-"ther, to occupy a line of posts among the "mountains which rise over the northern banks "of the Guadiana A few companies of our

" regiment advanced to occupy a village which " the French had just abandoned.

" We had had a brisk march over a scorched " and rugged country, which had already been " ransacked of all that could have supplied us " with fresh provisions; it was many days since " we had heard the creak of a commissary's " waggon, and we had been on very short com" mons. There was no reason to expect much " in the village we were now ordered to. The " French, who had just marched out, would, " of course, have helped themselves to what" ever was portable, and must have previously " pretty well drained the place. We made a " search, however, judging that, possibly, some" thing might have been concealed from them " by the peasants; and we actually soon dis" covered several houses where skins of wine " had been secreted. A soldier, Sir, I take it, " after hot service or fatigue, seldom thinks of " much beyond the comfort of drinking to ex-

"cess; and I freely own that our small party
"soon caused a sad scene of confusion.

"Every house and hovel was searched, and
"many a poor fellow, who had contrived to
"hide his last skin of wine from his enemies,
"was obliged to abandon it to his allies. You
"might see the poor natives on all sides running away, — some with a morsel of food, —
"others with a skin of wine in their arms, —
"and followed by the menaces and staggering
"steps of the weary and half-drunken soldiers.

"'Vino! vino!' was the cry in every part of
"the village. An English soldier, Sir, may be
"for months together in a foreign land, and
"have a pride in not knowing how to ask for
"any thing but liquor. I was no better than
"the rest. —'Vino! quiero vino!' said I, to a
"poor half-starved and ragged native, who
"was stealing off, and hiding something under
"his torn cloak. —'Vino! you beggarly scoundrel; give me vino,' said I. 'Vino no tengo!'
"he cried, as he broke from my grasp, and

" ran quickly and fearfully away. I was not " very drunk; I had not had above half my " quantity, and I pursued him up a street. — " But he was the fleeter, and I should have " lost him, had I not made a sudden turn, and " come right upon him in a forsaken alley, " where, I suppose, the poor thing dwelt.

" I seized him by the collar; he was small " and spare, and he trembled under my gripe; " but still he held his own, and only wrapped " his cloak the closer round his property. — " 'Vino, quiero vino!' said I again, 'give me " vino!' — 'Nada, nada tengo!' he repeated. " — I had already drawn my bayonet. — I am " ashamed, Sir, to say, that we used to do that " to terrify the poor wretches, and make them " the sooner give us their liquor.

" As I held him by the collar with one " hand, I pointed the bayonet at his breast " with the other, and I again cried, 'Vino!' — " 'Vino no tengo — niño, niño es!' — And he " spoke the words with such a look of truth and

“ earnestness, that, had I not fancied I could
“ trace through the folds of his cloak the very
“ shape of a small wine-skin, I should have
“ believed him. — ‘ Lying rascal ! ’ said I, ‘ so
“ you won’t give me the liquor ? then the dry
“ earth shall drink it !’ and I struck the point
“ of my bayonet deep into that which he was
“ still hugging to his breast. Oh, Sir ! it was
“ not wine that trickled down ! — it was blood
“ — warm blood ! and a piteous wail went
“ like a chill across my heart ! — The poor
“ Spaniard opened his cloak — he pointed to
“ his wounded child, — and his wild eye asked
“ me, plainer than words could have done,—
“ Monster ! are you satisfied ? I was sobered
“ in a moment. I fell upon my knees beside
“ the infant, and I tried to stanch the blood.
“ — Yes, the poor fellow understood the truth:
“ he saw, and he accepted my anguish, and
“ we joined our efforts to save the little victim.
“ Oh ! it was too late ! . . .

“ The little boy had fastened his small

“ clammy hands round a finger of each of us. “ He looked at us alternately, and seemed to “ ask alike from his father and his murderer “ that help which it was beyond the power of “ one of earth to give. The changes in the “ poor child’s countenance showed that it had “ few minutes to live. Sometimes it lay so still, “ I thought the last pang was over; when a “ slight convulsion would agitate its frame, “ and a momentary pressure of its little hands “ would give the gasping father a short, vain “ ray of hope.

“ You may believe, Sir, that an old soldier, who has only been able to keep his “ own life at the expense of an eye and two “ of his limbs; who has lingered out many “ a weary day in a camp hospital after a hot “ engagement, must have learnt to look on “ death without any unnecessary concern. I “ have sometimes wished for it myself, and “ often have felt thankful when my poor “ wounded comrades have been released by "it from pain. I have seen it, too, in other "shapes. I have seen the death-blow dealt, "when its effects have been so instant, that "the brave heart's blood has been spilt, and "the pulses have ceased to beat, while the "streak of life and health was still fresh upon "the cheek; — when a smile has remained upon "the lips of my brother soldier, even after he "had fallen a corpse across my path. But, "oh! Sir, what is all this, compared with what "I suffered as I watched life ebb slowly from "the wound which I had myself so wantonly "inflicted in the breast of a helpless, innocent child!... It was by mistake, by accident. Oh, yes! I know it. I know it "well, — and day and night I have striven to "forget that hour; but it is of no use: the "cruel recollection never leaves my mind — "that piteous wail is ever in my ears. The "father's agony will follow me to the grave!"

L.

THE ODIOUS
CATHOLICK QUESTION.*

> " Puis, pour achever ses peines, le malheureux est conduit à la chambre basse, et mis en état de souffrir La Question." — *Histoire de l'Inquisition.*

I AM a very unfortunate young man, smarting from the recent infliction of a scourge which is felt by so many of his Majesty's subjects, that I cannot help thinking the publication of these, my memoirs, may be of some use, as a warning to society. The scourge of which I complain is, " politicks." Politicks have been my plague, ever since I was born; and politicks have gone near to make me wish that I never had been born. I hate them with a hatred I cannot describe; still, all other branches of politicks are endurable to me in comparison with that master-plague, " The Catholick Question." That odious question has just put the finishing stroke to my misfortunes. It has been the ruin of me — it has been the ruin of all my hopes of happiness — and has driven me into my present state of distraction. The first lesson my good old nurse taught me, was, " to ask no questions." Good soul! No doubt she feared I might in time come to be entangled with the Catholick Question; and so I have been with a vengeance. And yet, extraordinary as it may sound, after having described the influence which that question has had over my happiness and fortunes, I know nothing at all about it; I do not even know who is Pope; and I don't care.

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* This story was written some years ago. To those, who do not recollect the progress of that great question, now happily settled, a great deal of the violence of feeling detailed in this fiction may seem unnatural. Those, who do remember the course of it, may have reason to think those feelings, however preposterous, not exaggerated in the description.

It is surely much to be wished, that those gentlemen on both sides, and all sides, and no side at all, who make such a fuss concerning the Catholick Question, would understand that people are tired of it; that, therefore, it is high time to have done with it; or, as greater men than I have said, to settle it one way or other. Then, indeed, honest tradespeople might have some chance of being at peace and happy, which this question will never let them be while things go on as they are now doing. Gentlefolk may think that politicks were only made for them, and that gentlefolk are the only people whose happiness is interrupted by them; but they are strangely mistaken.—Gentle or simple,—or both,—it is all one;—now-a-days all are politicians;—and this quarrelsome question, in particular, creeps into every family, high and low, and sets us all, fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, together by the ears. I only speak of what I have seen and experienced; and I will now endeavour to make my words good, by telling my own story.

My father ought to have been a gentleman, —that is, his family had been long known where they lived. It had ever been most respectable in character, and, at one time, it was opulent; but things were changed before my generation, and most of its members had been reduced to earn their bread by trade. Truth to tell, my father was a fishmonger, and a very good and tranquil trade he might have found it, had he meddled with nothing worse than fishmongering.

I lived at home, to assist my father in his book-keeping, and to help carry out fish of a morning to our different customers; as I grew bigger, my time was more and more employed, and I had little or no leisure for much thinking about any thing. Still I can remember thinking very early, what a sad pity it was that when Sunday did come, we could none of us enjoy it —and why? Why, because, as surely as it pleased God to send this day of rest, so surely did it please my honoured father to unhallow the same by political debatings, and disputings with his friends and neighbours. They would meet with intent to be happy; to spend the holyday in social intercourse and friendly hospitality; but in vain. Politicks, alas! met them on the threshold. — Then away went harmony, good-fellowship — every thing good; — and the evening was certain to close in discord and all uncharitableness. Six following days of sober industry generally had the effect of allaying some of the rancorous feelings contracted in this manner; but the Sabbath brought another and another opportunity of renewing the evil; till at length the pernicious habit of quarrelling took deep root. Friendships were thus destroyed, which might have withstood every other attempt to dissolve them, and ties, even of blood, were broken, which might have defied every thing short of the Catholick Question to sever them.

When quite a child, I used to sit, dressed in my Sunday suit, with my new hat upon my head, staring at my father, and endeavouring thus to catch his eye, and remind him of the promised walk. How I used to sigh and yawn, as the passing " How d' ye do?" of a neighbour, impatient of the answer which at first it seemed to solicit, proceeded to provoke an argumentative conversation? How my heart would rise with the same neighbour from his seat, as he announced the blissful intelligence that he " must be off." But oh! how it would sink again with him upon his chair, as he resumed it and the dispute together! Still there was hope—but when (as seldom failed to happen) I became aware, by the deepening frowns and louder voices of the speakers, that they had got upon what they called " the Catholick Question,"—when I saw my father put by his Sunday gloves in the cupboard, and hang his best beaver upon the peg which it had so lately left,—then, indeed, I knew all chance was over of my chief amusement for a whole week to come: and who can wonder if I hated the cause out of which all my early disappointments sprung? On these occasions I would escape from the parlour, betake myself to my little chair in the kitchen, and sob and sulk over my hard fate. My mother, too, added her part to this feeling. She would bear all smaller inconveniences and mortifications with patience (and yet her Sunday walk with her husband and child was a great delight to her, and the only recreation she ever indulged in); but, when these conversations warmed into disputes, — when neighbours, flocking in and taking opposite sides of the argument, gave to it the sound of a quarrel, — when angry words, and bitter smiles, in which there was no merriment, were followed by more angry replies, — then she would, in her turn, make her escape from the scene of discord. In such moments, the sight of my little dressed-out person (according so ill with the dejection of my attitude and countenance) would be too much for her; and she would take me in her arms and weep with me; — she would tell me it was not my father's fault, — that it was his misfortune, and all owing to the Catholick Question. If I had not hated that, I must have hated my own father. A child cannot be deprived of all the amusements of his age without looking to something or somebody as the cause; and that something or somebody he is sure to hate. There was some little virtue, therefore, as well as much convenience, in my detestation of politicks. Whenever I fell into a rage against my parent, I called him the Old Question, and thus could rail on, to my heart's content, without committing any very conscious breach of the fifth commandment. And, though I say it, I might have been older, and bigger, and wiser, and still not have come better out of the scrape.

Without knowing the meaning of the word, I understood that my father was an Emancipator. I have said that I am totally uninformed on these matters. In that Babel, our parlour, it would have been difficult, even for an inquirer, to learn what was passing; — and I was no inquirer. It does not follow that one must be well acquainted with a subject because it is continually under discussion in one's hearing I had long learned to turn, not a figuratively, but a really, deaf ear to all sounds that bore the tone of disputation. There never had been a moment when I wished to understand politicks; on the contrary, if I had a pride, it was in my ignorance on all matters connected with them. I owed them a grudge, which, I do believe, will endure to the end of my life. My father was never known to flog me but once; and that was for burning a newspaper containing a debate on the Catholick Question, which he declared he had only read twice over.

He was a good even-tempered man naturally; but no temper is proof against politicks. He was somehow or other almost always in the minority (as they called it) at these meetings in his own parlour; — and that did not mend the matter. I remember my mother and I used to say, “Such a one is in the minority,” whenever we meant to impute ill humour to any one.

With all this, however, my father was an excellent man; he minded his business, took care of his family, and all things went on decently, with the exceptions of his temper and my amusements. As I became older, and capable of taking much of the trouble of his shop off his hands, he indulged still more in the way of his mastering passion. He would now leave the shop to me of an afternoon, and go pretty frequently into the gallery of the House of Commons; always choosing those evenings when some discussion was expected to take place on the Catholick Claims. Thus I was brought up, as it were, at enmity with this great question; — it spoiled all my pleasures as a child, and abridged my liberty, while it added to my labour, as I grew older. It was a sad life I led for a youth of a cheerful and social disposition. — I really began to contemplate the running away from under my father's roof; and I should, indeed, have taken this step, had I not been deterred by his constantly repeated assurance that Emancipation for the Catholicks *must* soon be granted, which would make him perfectly happy, and put him in a good humour the remainder of his life.

At length, and when my patience was at its last ebb, some other subject seemed to share his thoughts, and worked a considerable improvement in his temper. Whisperings, and noddings, and all the visible signs of consultation, took place between my father and mother; and, before long, I was informed that they had resolved upon a marriage for me with a cousin of my own, the daughter of my father's only brother. I knew I had such an uncle, and that I had been called Benjamin, after him; but I had never seen him. He was the head of our house, and still possessed a small landed property in a distant county; the last remnant of the considerable possessions that had belonged to our family in its prosperity. He farmed this little estate himself, together with a large portion of land contiguous to it, which had been sold by his father, and which he now rented. By this arrangement, my uncle was enabled still to dwell in the family mansion, in which he had been born; but it had suffered changes and reductions proportioned to those to which its masters had been obliged to submit; and it now went by the unostentatious appellation of "The Farm." My father and his brother had been much attached in early youth, but different occupations, and manners of living, had completely separated them in after-life. The ties of relationship had been, however, constantly kept up by certain tokens of remembrance, which were sure to arrive at Christmas time, in the substantial shape of turkeys and chines, and barn-door fowls; these tokens were, of course, duly acknowledged by us, and never without the accompaniments of fine salmons, with lobsters for sauce, turbots, and barrels of oysters, &c. &c.: but here ended, as often as it recurred, all communication between the brothers.

These presents from the country, as was natural, exalted my ideas of the country itself, and I had long cherished a strong, but secret wish to visit my uncle Benjamin. For the two last years, my mind had been roused to curiosity respecting my cousin Margaret, who I had heard was just of my own age. I longed to know whom and what she resembled, and I saw her under various forms of beauty in my dreams. I had now reached the age of sentiment; and, during my father's frequent absences, when I had to remain closely at home, and mind the shop, I had latterly sought amusement for many hours of mental idleness in reading novels, which I procured from a circulating library next door to our house. This course of reading had all the charms of a stolen pleasure, for my father had ordered me not to employ my time so unprofitably. I therefore kept my novels carefully out of his sight, and learned little but dissimulation; for I always had a greasy old newspaper at hand, which I pretended to be busy with, whenever he made his appearance.

I need not say that I listened with satisfaction, and glowing cheeks, to my father's announcement of the marriage he had settled for me. My joy was complete, when he told me that I should soon pay my uncle a visit at his farm, and begin a personal acquaintance with his daughter. The proposed alliance had been offered in due form by my father: it had been accepted immediately by my uncle, whose one letter on the subject had been received that very morning.

Accordingly, when the full season was over in London, and business began to grow slack, I set out upon my long-wished-for expedition; every trouble forgotten, — Catholick Question almost forgiven, — and my mind full of pleasing anticipations. But, when I arrived at my uncle's, Margaret was absent; she was at the house of a neighbouring squire, whose daughters were much attached to her, and had been fond of making her their companion from her infancy. Every thing at the farm marked regret at her absence, and impatience for her return. Every thing seemed to go wrong without her. I constantly heard it repeated by one or another of the inmates— "How we do want Margaret!"—"What shall we do without Margaret?"—"All will be right when Margaret comes back!" &c. &c. She soon returned, and every face beamed with joy, and all was indeed right. As for me, in less than half an hour I was very heartily in love.

I know I ought, here, to describe my cousin; but I scarcely know how to set about it. She was not like any of the fair visions I had so often seen in my sleep: they were all less lovely than the real Margaret. She was tall and slender, and graceful as nature herself—

active as youth, health, and good humour could make her. Every thing she did, every thing she said, every thing she wore, became her, and one never could be weary of looking at her. She was necessary to every one; her father was uneasy if she was out of his sight for a moment; her brothers were continually calling after her; her cheerful voice answered, before her light step could be distinguished, as she obeyed with alacrity every call: she seemed busy for all, and yet ever ready to attend to each. But—must I own it? —she was inexplicable in her conduct to me. She was not unkind—that was not in her nature; and, sometimes, I fancied her smile had a peculiarly sweet expression, when she spoke to me; and certainly her step was not less quick in obliging me. But she avoided me; she would talk of years to come in her father's house, as if she contemplated no change in her own situation; she would artfully give a turn to every conversation that seemed to promise some allusion to our projected marriage; and, if we were left but for a moment together, she would find, or feign an excuse for quitting me abruptly.

For some time, I flattered myself this was only the effect of our relative situation. She knew I was come to court her, and a little diffidence was to be accounted for, and would soon wear off. Instead of wearing off, however, the bad symptoms increased rapidly, and she soon avoided my attentions with a degree of caution remarkable in so frank-hearted a girl. My uncle was a very silent man, and seldom gave expression to his feelings; but he treated me exactly as he treated his own sons, and that was enough to show I was approved by him; the young men were fond of me, and often spoke of my marriage with their sister as an event to which they looked forward with pleasure; so I endeavoured to make my mind easy.

Time passed on without my observing its progress. I took my share in the usual occupations, as well as in the recreations, of the young farmers; and I became like one of the family. Every thing was new and interesting to me; and every day I hoped that the next would bring with it something to better my case with Margaret. At her brother's request, she would sometimes join us in our rambles. One day, I had the wit to lead her pony astray, and, (as I thought,) to lose myself with Margaret in a wood. For the first time, I assumed courage to speak of our marriage, and to complain of her coldness. My complaint was long and pathetick. The pony, like a good confidant, took the hint, and grazed unconcernedly; while Margaret, lengthening the bridle to indulge him, listened with grave, but patient, attention to all I had to say. When I had finished, she sighed; and some tears, which had been for several minutes gathering in her eyes, fell in big drops upon the pony's shaggy mane. She laid her hand upon my shoulder with an affectionate pressure, and said, "Ben, don't talk so; you make me unhappy. You see how much I am wanted at home—they cannot spare me—I must not leave them."—"Margaret, Margaret," said I, "say it at once—you cannot love me."—"I won't say that, Ben," she replied; "but,—I cannot marry you;—we can be good friends, and kind cousins, without marrying." She looked at me with a tender and anxious expression, as she shortened her pony's bridle, and turned him into a narrow foot-path almost hid by the bushes. She was out of sight and reach in a moment; but, in a short time, she returned with her brothers to my rescue, I being the only bewildered one of the party.

Bewildered I was, in every sense. I was determined to force Margaret to an explanation; and, for this purpose, I eagerly sought an opportunity which she carefully and dexterously avoided. I now received a sudden order from my father to return to London, as he wanted my assistance in his business; and he desired me to be sure to start on the day after that on which I should receive his letter.

For many weeks, I had not heard one word of politicks; and my heart sickened when I thought of returning to the atmosphere and the topicks which I had been so glad to quit. My uncle seemed not to possess the means of indulging in such subjects, even if he had the inclination; — for he lived retired, he saw very few besides his own family, — and, if a neighbour did happen to call at his house, it was merely for some farming purpose. Moreover, he was a man of very few words, (quite unlike all the politicians it had been my ill-fortune to meet with at home), and I, naturally, and not very untruly, concluded that he was a man of few ideas. The truth was, that, although he spoke little and seldom, he was a vehement thinker, though, as I have since suspected, he generally thought wrong; and, at this very time, his mind was deeply engaged, not only on most publick subjects, but more particularly on that of the Catholick claims; and he was a strenuous opposer of Emancipation. He had imbibed his opinions chiefly from a pretty constant intercourse upon agricultural affairs, with a neighbouring "No Popery" squire — the same whose daughters were so fond of Margaret. He let the squire read for him, and judge for him, and thought that, because the squire was very understanding in agricultural concerns, he must be equally accomplished as a statesman. This gentleman told my uncle, that too much had already been conceded to the Roman Catholicks, and he gave him his word of honour, in right down earnest, that, if more were granted, the Pope himself would live in Windsor Castle, and fell Windsor forest for faggots, to burn Protestants. The squire offered to wager his own head for the fact. Well, — my uncle could not but believe there *was* something in *that.* — In short, under this tutorage, he came honestly to the conclusion, that the Roman Catholicks were scarcely fellow-creatures, (certainly not fellow-Christians), and that all who wished for their emancipation must be traitors to their king, and enemies to their country. Such, as I have since learned, were my uncle Benjamin's opinions.

On the evening before my departure, we sat later than usual after supper. I was vexed at my summons to London: I was still more out of temper with Margaret; for she had slipped away upon some frivolous excuse, although she knew this was the last evening we were to spend together for some time. My uncle, (although, as usual, silent,) continued up beyond his hour, as if unwilling to part with me; and my two cousins lamented the necessity of my leaving them, and insisted upon my speedy return to the farm. We conversed learnedly on fishmongery in all its branches, and I received their cordial wishes for good success in my trade. My uncle had been dozing, when some perfectly innocent observation of mine on the consumption of fish caught his ear and opened his eyes. Fixing them upon me with a penetrating expression, he said, " Nephew, that was a sly remark — I fear you mean something by that — you hope to live to see more fish eaten by all classes in this country. There are others of that way of thinking, young man; and there are those who are plotting at this moment to bring such a thing about." — " Here's success to them," cried I, brandishing a glass which I had just filled with my uncle's best ale. " Drink that toast in my house if you dare, sir!" said my uncle, in a loud and angry tone. " I do dare," replied I (tossing off the liquor — already out of temper as I was, and somewhat nettled at the phrase), " I do dare, uncle; and what's more, I heartily wish there was not a man in Old England that, for our sakes and for our good, was not *obliged* to eat fish." — " Good God!"

groaned my uncle, "can it be possible? Have I been mistaken? — But I won't be rash — Fool! — you know not what you are saying; hold your tongue!"

God knows, I did not understand my uncle, but I knew what "fool" meant; and I, like all other fools, was obstinate; and so, instead of taking his advice, and holding my tongue, I went on magnanimously with the dispute. "I don't see why I should hold my tongue, uncle," continued I. "I am not a child, and I know perfectly well what I am saying, perhaps better than you do. — I said I wished people were *obliged*, for our sakes and our good, to eat more fish — and so I do — and what's more still, I wish that all, up to the king upon his throne were obliged by law to eat nothing but fish twice a week at least, all the year round. It would be a glorious time for us then. Do I know what I am saying now, uncle?" — "Yes," answered he, "it is plain enough now. Good God! how greatly I have been mistaken! Young man," continued he, "with increasing emotion, "I have done with you; only answer me one question, What is your father?" — "A fishmonger," replied I, staring with unfeigned astonishment. "Puppy!" said my uncle, "you know very well what I mean — you shall not so evade my question — answer me directly, What is your father? Is he — can he be — a Catholick Emancipator?" — "That he is," cried I, with exultation, hoping I was at last in the right box; and I am mistaken, or a Catholick Emancipator he will be the longest day he has to live. We are all," cried I, raising my voice, "we are all Catholick Emancipators." — "Then I have no brother!" said my uncle, with a deep sigh. He resumed his seat — he rapped his clenched fist with violence upon the table — we all rose in consternation; and Margaret ran into the room, looking prettier than ever, with half her hair in papillotes, and the rest flowing loose about her shoulders. "Margaret," said my uncle to the frightened girl, in a solemn tone of voice, “ but yesterday I bade you look upon that young man as your future husband — I now tell you, I had rather see you in your coffin than see you his wife. As for you, sir, I thank you for showing yourself in your true colours before it was too late. Leave my house directly; it is now no home for you, and shall be no harbour to one, whom I consider as no better than a traitor to his king and country. Boys, turn him out. Margaret, my child — I would sooner give you to our Protestant cow-boy, than see you the wife of your Popish cousin!” The dear girl stepped suddenly forward, and fixed her large blue eyes upon me in astonishment. Her father caught her by both arms, as if she had been in danger, and took her with him out of the room.

I protest, I was so confounded I could hardly stir — I could not follow the whole of my uncle’s meaning; but his last words showed he thought me a Roman Catholick; and, as I could soon set that to rights, I began to recover from my surprise. But, before I could say one word in my own defence, my young cousins proceeded to give a proof of their strength, as well as their Protestantism, by hustling me out of the house, and barring the door between us. They were deaf to all expostulation, and I could but submit. My pride rose, as my surprise subsided; and I resolved to leave the spot directly, — to hasten to my father, and complain of the brutal treatment I had experienced. I thought of Margaret, and turned to take one last look at the house that contained her. There was a light in her window, and I ran towards it. Magaret herself opened the casement gently, and leaning out, appeared to be looking for some one. All my pride, all my resentment, vanished in a moment. "Margaret," whispered I, "all shall be explained. Will you too desert me? Will you too send me from you without one word, one token of kindness?"

"Hush," said she, hastily, "there is no time for words, and I want no explanation. I thought you would contrive to see me, and I prepared a token for you; one *you* will value — one that you deserve." She dropped something into my raised hands, closed the window suddenly, and extinguished the light.

I got from under the shadow of the house, eager to examine, in the moonlight, what she had given me. It was a little cross, — formed of black wood, curiously carved, and with a piece of silver string attached to it. "Cruel, cruel Margaret! and this was the token she had prepared for me — the keepsake I 'deserved!' Was it not enough to see me driven disgracefully from your presence, denied your beloved society, and forbidden to think of you as my promised bride? Was not this enough; but you must raise my hopes afresh — make me fly at your beck — triumph over my weakness, and all to insult me with a mockery most unworthy of yourself!"

My soliloquy ended: I left my uncle's garden, and soon reached the village. I knocked up the people at the little inn, and flung myself upon a bed, where, though I did not sleep, I lay stupified till morning. I then resolved to return once more to the farm, just to upbraid my uncle with his injustice, and to demand my clothes. Margaret's cruel mockery had made this an easy task to me. I fancied I no longer wished to link my fate with one who could be guilty of so heartless, so coarse, an act.

Accordingly, I went to the farm; no one opposed my entrance, and I walked into the usual sitting-room. My uncle was there, seated in his arm-chair. His sons were standing before him; Margaret was sitting on a stool by his side; his arm was round her waist, and she rested her head upon his shoulder. They seemed to be in consultation, and the men started when they saw me. The cruel girl lifted her head for a moment, smiled, and replaced it on her father's shoulder: that smile was wormwood to me; it roused the anger that was near sinking when I first saw her, and gave me courage to proceed; and feeling, as I did, her mockery more deeply than all my other injuries, I valorously began my oration with a complaint of it, proceeding with the whole history, and producing, at the proper moment, the ebony cross, which I held suspended by the silver string. Margaret uttered one piercing scream, and fell senseless at her father's feet! All crowded round her: in our terror we forgot even our animosity, and we all assisted to raise her from the ground; — all but my uncle. He sat silent, and almost as motionless as his fainting child. He held the little crucifix, the cause of consternation, in his hand — and he gazed alternately upon it and upon Margaret. At length she recovered; she looked up, and her eyes met her father's stern and earnest gaze; — she sunk upon her knees, and her beauteous face dropped upon her bosom. "Father," she murmured, "you have discovered my secret.

Yes — I am a Catholick. Do with me as you please." My uncle rose from his chair; the poor girl clasped his knees, and looked up to him imploringly, when — shame to his manhood and his blood — he struck her to the ground! "Margaret," said he — and he paused, for his voice failed him — with a great effort he continued, "Margaret, on one condition, and on one alone, you are still my child. Abjure your new, your idolatrous, faith, and keep your father. Hold to your new faith, if you choose — but never attempt to see him more." He then beckoned to his sons, and, with their assistance, left the room.

I was alone with Margaret — I, the cause of all her sorrow, was alone with her — but I dared not approach her. She wrung her hands in woe, and continued to sob for many minutes, as if her heart were breaking. Suddenly, she espied the little cross, which had been thrown upon the floor in the general confusion. She seized it eagerly, gazed upon it for some time with an expression of meek resignation, which no words I am master of can describe, then kissed it with fervour, and placed it in her bosom. She had checked her tears, and she now rose with calm composure from the ground. At this moment, our eyes met. Instead of loading me with reproaches which were so justly my due, she held out her hand to me, and smiled. "Ben," said she, "it was not your fault; but how grievously you misunderstood me. I gave you that cross as a token of my affection, as a pledge of our faith. You have heard my father's mandate; of course my choice is made; meet me this evening at the entrance of the village; you must provide for my departure; — I have now no friend but you." In a moment she was gone. Her brothers were approaching, and, thinking that a meeting with them at such a crisis would lead to no good, I hastened from the room, and from the house.

Poor Margaret! It was evident that there were more mistakes; that she, too, was deceived;

that she considered me a Roman Catholick; and that her sudden confidence in me was thus to be accounted for. But there was no time nor opportunity now for explanation, and it was not in human nature to forego her offer; she would be safer with me than alone, and I determined to meet her with a chaise, prepared for flight.

She was true to her appointment. Towards evening, I saw her coming along the winding footpath that led from the farm to the village. — She was in the dress of a young girl of the country, and carrying a bundle. — Her step was faltering and slow, but she never paused, and she never once looked back. I put her, trembling and pale, into the chaise, and we were soon on our road towards London. Her purpose was strong, but her spirits were overwrought; and she wept long and bitterly. I thought I ought to lose no time in undeceiving her concerning myself. So, as soon as she was sufficiently composed to listen to me, I entered upon the subject, deploring my own blind folly, and her father's intemperate conduct, as the causes of all our misunderstandings. She had, indeed, conceived his words literally, when he called me her "Popish cousin"—she was much disappointed, and appeared cast down. She acknowledged that she had liked me from the beginning of our acquaintance; but that, knowing her marriage with me must hasten the disclosure of her secret, dreading the effects of her father's violence, and not doubting but that I should break off the engagement upon the knowledge of her religious opinions, she had endeavoured not only to conquer her own inclination, but, likewise, to discourage me from urging the fulfilment of her father's promise to my parents. She owned that the scene of the last night had given her equal pleasure and surprise — that she had instantly settled in her own mind to place full confidence in me, and to leave the rest to time and accident.

"And now, Ben," said she, "you must wish to know how I became a Roman Catholick.

Strange as it may seem to you, it is all owing to my father and the Catholick Question." (There! my old enemy again!) "For many years we were all happy and comfortable, and my father was as cheerful and light-hearted as any man; but, when the present squire took possession of his property, and came to live in the great house, all was soon changed. He set my father upon caring for politicks, and used to send for him to the house, take him from his business, and keep him for many hours together, talking over the affairs of the nation. He was sure to return home uneasy and gloomy, and as if he knew of some misfortune that was hanging over us all. The squire took a prominent part on the Catholick Question, and suffered no publick dinner, nor even turnpike meeting, to pass in our neighbourhood, without making long speeches on that subject. At the time I am speaking of, it happened to be the eve of a general election, and nothing would satisfy the squire but trying to get into Parliament, and he persuaded my father that every thing would go wrong in publick if he were not returned to sit for the county. All their endeavours failed, however. The squire was more than half ruined in a contest, and my father never could recover the disappointment. He grew more earnest about politicks than ever, and so violent on the Catholick claims, and so gloomy in his temper, that he became quite an altered man, and some thought disturbed in his mind. Oh! Ben, such things I have heard him say of the poor Roman Catholicks: you would not believe that so good a man, and so kind in every other respect, should be able to harbour such bitter resentments. In short, he said such hard things against the Roman Catholicks, that he set me upon wondering if they could be all true. I knew but one Catholick in the world.— She was a French lady, who lived in the squire's family, partly as governess to the young ladies, and partly to attend on their mamma; that is, she sat in the school-room to talk French, and teach the French grammar of a morning, and she passed the evenings alone in her lady's dressing-room, mending her laces, and making French caps and bonnets for all the family. Madame was always very kind to me, and would take pleasure in teaching me French, and curious needleworks, when it did not interfere with the studies of the young ladies. I thought it was next to impossible that a creature so mild and inoffensive could be capable of the crimes and perjuries I had heard laid to the charge of every Roman Catholick. I knew she was unfortunate, that she was a widow, had lost all her children and her fortune, and that she was reduced to work for her bread among strangers, in a foreign land. I saw her always neglected, and often insulted, in the squire's family; still she was resigned and cheerful, and ready to be kind and charitable whenever there was any one so forlorn and poor as to need her aid. At last, I took courage. I told her my perplexities, and repeated to her many of my father's opinions concerning her religion. She answered them with gentleness, but with firmness. She suggested excuses for him in his ignorance, while she plainly (to my capacity) pointed out the injustice and the falsehood of the charges. She taught the child of her enemy the duty of a daughter, and sent me home instructed how to soothe and excuse the violence of his temper. I returned to her again and again for further instruction and encouragement. In short, by her kind and judicious help, I was enabled to calm my father's mind — to lead him, by degrees, to resume his former habits of useful industry — to take an interest once more in his own affairs — to look to his own family for comfort and happiness, and even to forbear giving intemperate utterance to feelings, which, when so indulged, never failed to discompose his mind and injure his health. He saw and felt the good I did him, and his affection for me soon knew no bounds. To me he was again communicative, and, at times, even cheerful; and, although he continued generally reserved in his manner, he became once more kind and considerate to my brothers and all around him, and we were all happy again." Here, poor Margaret paused to weep. Recollections of her father's former fondness quite overcame her. "But, Ben," at length she continued, "there was one important secret, which, for my father's sake, as well as for my own, I kept carefully concealed. Was it a criminal concealment? I was, myself, a Roman Catholick! It would have availed nothing with him had he been told that his own unjust prejudices alone had set me upon making enquiries after the truth, and that the answers I had obtained to those enquiries had converted me to the faith he abhorred. I have been a Catholick three years. This very dress I have used as a disguise, in which I have attended occasionally at a Roman Catholick Chapel, at ——, with Madame. She likewise introduced me to a Priest, at whose house we used to rest when we went upon these excursions. Thus, I have been enabled to satisfy my conscience and attend to my religion, while I continued to fulfil the duties of a child towards my father."

Such was Margaret's history. We reached the town of —— that night. Here I resolved to stop, as she required rest after the fatigue of body and mind she had undergone. I tried to cheer her sinking spirits. I assured her my father needed only to see her to be her friend; and I dwelt with the sanguine tone of youthful affection on the happiness that awaited us. Margaret did not share my exultation. She sighed heavily when we parted for the night—she lingered at the door as if unwilling to part, and, although she tried to smile, there was a tear upon her cheek. In the morning, my surprise and mortification may be imagined, when, instead of finding Margaret ready to pursue the journey with me, I was told that she had left the inn at day-break in the Dover mail, and a letter was put into my hands. This letter (when I was able to read it) explained the mystery, in a manner which, although it grieved me sorely, I knew not how to condemn. My noble-minded Margaret said, she could not consent to the mortification of appearing before my father, till he should have heard her story, and been allowed time to judge for himself, and for me. She begged me not to be uneasy on her account. She said she had long been endeavouring to prepare her mind for some sudden accident — that she had for many months saved her pocket-money, and was thus provided with a sum sufficient for her journey — that she was likewise in possession of letters, written by her friend, the French lady, which would secure her being received and well treated in a convent at Abbeville in France, whither she was hastening, and where she should remain for the present. She urged me to go directly to my father; to tell him every thing, and inform her, by letter, of the success of my appeal to his affection. She owned she was not very sanguine, but she promised to be guided entirely by my wishes, provided my father should consent unhesitatingly to receive her (proscribed and portionless as she now was) as his daughter-in-law; and she forbade me, upon pain of her displeasure, to attempt to follow her.

I could only do as she bade me; so I took my place in a coach that was just starting for London, and consoled myself, as well as I could, for the absence of her with whom, the evening before, I had formed so many plans of happiness which, from thenceforth, I fondly and proudly hoped, were never more to be interrupted. I soon recovered my spirits. I determined to throw myself upon my father's generosity to enable me to marry a girl without a fortune; and I now began to depend almost as much upon my own eloquence as I had before done upon Margaret's beauty, to procure me a favourable reception. As to her religion, I had no fears on that score; on the contrary, I had every reason to believe that would be a point much in her favour, and that it alone might induce him to overlook the real obstacle — her want of fortune. But I was doomed to be mistaken. Can it be believed what my father had the inconsistency, as well as cruelty, to say? — "Why, you stupid fool, Ben," said he, "what a pack of nonsense and confusion have you got into your head? Can't you comprehend that it is the very hatred I feel towards their religion that makes me so anxious to emancipate the Roman Catholicks? It is persecution, boy, that keeps them together, and binds them closer and closer to their ridiculous superstitions! Emancipate them, and they are ours to-morrow; that is, in less than twenty years, they will all turn Protestants. Marry a Catholick? and before Emancipation is granted? — Marry the devil sooner! — The House would be filled with priests, all plotting against Emancipation; for those gentry know very well that their power will soon cease after that is obtained.' In this way he went on till he was tired. I was too much astounded, too broken-hearted, to reply, and he left me with three injunctions —to be a good boy, to mind my business, and never to think of my cousin again.

With a heavy heart, I applied myself once more to be a good boy, to mind my business,—and to write to my dear Margaret. I was forced to tell her the truth; but I endeavoured to inspire her heart with hopes which I hardly dared encourage in my own; and, as all my novels authorised, I bade her expect every thing from time, love, and constancy.

Time, love, and constancy, however, had to go on till patience was almost worn out. I thought that dreary winter would never end; Spring came at last, but brought no hope; Summer succeeded, but without gladness; Autumn had no fruits that I cared for; a whole Year passed, and no change! It was now Spring again. — My father was more than ever devoted to politicks — his temper had been growing worse and worse — Catholick Emancipation was said to be going backwards, and a pretty sort of life I had of it!

Parliament was now sitting. The Catholick Question came again under discussion, and my father's keen and irritable feelings were in full activity. At last, there was an unexpected majority in favour of the claims of the Catholicks. After a long and late attendance in the gallery of the House of Commons, my father (having stayed out all night) came home one morning, (while my mother and I were at breakfast,) in a state of boisterous joy, which was perfectly new in him and extraordinary to us. We soon discovered that he had been celebrating what he called his "Triumph," too frequently and too freely during his long walk home, at an hour when it was very unusual for people to have been drinking instead of taking their natural rest. In short, my father was very much intoxicated. We put him to bed in a state of great bodily fatigue and mental excitement. By the afternoon, he was in a high fever and unable to rise. We called in medical aid, but his illness and his danger increased rapidly. Notwithstanding his sufferings, he showed constant and intense anxiety concerning the Catholick Question. He said he must and he would get up, and go again to the Parliament House; he cried out for newspapers, fancied every noise he heard was the newsman's bell, and disregarded all our beseechings to him to be calm. He raved in his fever, and talked much about "winning it by six." The next day he grew quite desponding, shook his head often, and sighed as if a great weight were on his mind. He said, "He feared things would go ill for him in the upper place," or something to that effect, a phrase which shocked my mother and me very much. We could not understand it, for he was a very good man; but we thought it respectful not to repeat it to any one; so we darkened the chamber and gave him his quieting drops. But in spite of all our care my poor father died that evening — a victim, in good truth, to this awful question; leaving us to deplore our loss, and not inclined to consider with less aversion than before this fatal cause of all our past and present misfortunes.

But one thought had power to penetrate like a sunbeam into the house of mourning — to impart light to the darkness, warmth to the coldness, life and animation to the stillness, of even the chamber of death. I could now marry Margaret! I could shield her youth, her innocence, from sorrow and danger. My home would be her home — my mother her mother!

This kind parent had always wished me to marry my cousin. She had no prejudices — she desired nothing but my happiness, and was the first to propose, that as soon as I had arranged my father's affairs, and entered upon his business, I should go to Abbeville — bring home Margaret, and place her under her own care and protection. My impatience to impart the happiness I felt could not brook the necessary delay of my journey — and I wrote to the dear girl to prepare her for my speedy arrival.

This letter must have reached Abbeville, on the very day that I received one myself from Margaret. Alas! she was lost to me for ever! She had taken the veil!.... Her letter was written the evening before her sacrifice was completed, and this cruel sacrifice she had made for *my* sake; to destroy the hope to which I still so fondly clung, and which she thought might interfere with my duty to my father, and to take from me all temptation to withstand his wishes.

She sent me, as a last token of her affection, the well-known little crucifix. "Keep it for "my sake, dear cousin;" so she wrote: "it is "all I have to bestow. It has been a support

" to me in my affliction, and may it be a com-
" fort to you! Couple it with the memory
" of Margaret! And, when you look upon
" it, remember, and try to imitate the courage
" with which she hopes she has fulfilled what
" she firmly believed to be her duty. I have
" not taken this step," she continued, " without
" making a last and urgent appeal to my poor
" father. I wrote to him — I offered to be
" guided by him in every other particular, if
" he would only suffer me to practise in private
" my own religion. I implored him to receive
" the outcast — to let me be his servant — his
" slave — and only to restore me to his affec-
" tion and forgiveness as I should be found to
" deserve them. — Alas! in vain; he was in-
" flexible. My eldest brother wrote to me by
" my father's order, with merely a formal re-
" petition of the original cruel sentence — con-
" fessing that he inserted by stealth a few kind
" words, which he added to express his own
" brotherly love and sympathy."

[The paper was here so blotted with my poor Margaret's tears, that she had been obliged to leave it and take another sheet.]

“ And now,” she proceeded, “ one parting “ word of advice. Your mind is still unin-“ formed on the differences between our two “ religions. It is time you should instruct your-“ self concerning those differences. — At all “ events, judge with charity, the first of Christian “ virtues, the motives and the actions of your “ fellow-Christians. And, should your voice “ be ever called for in the great strife that is “ now going on, give it, as much unbiassed by “ passion as I know it will be by interest, and “ join in no vulgar (however popular) prejudice “ or injustice. Ben, remember this; by merely “ keeping out of my father's sight those out-“ ward forms of my religion, which, while I used “ them in private, both as comforts and duties, “ would have been offensive to him, I was “ enabled to remain for three years a Roman “ Catholick, before he discovered the change.

" And how, at last, was the discovery made? " Not by any falling off in my duties as a " daughter: on the contrary, those duties had " been doubled in the time by my mother's " death! — Not by any diminution in my affection towards my family — No; I was the " pride and the joy of their lives — and I have " heard my father bless God for having given " him such a child — but by a mere accident, " which you know but too well.

" *My father had imbibed an early, but a most* " *unjust, prejudice against all who profess my* " *religion, in consequence of an act of treachery* " *perpetrated by a Catholick towards his father,* " *or grandfather, I don't know which. His family had been unlucky, and had suffered by* " *other acts of treachery from other pretended* " *friends, when equal losses had been incurred.* " *But these had come from Protestants. They* " *were forgiven — they were forgotten. And it* " *seemed as if the one injury that proceeded from* " *a Catholick was the only one to be recorded*

" *in the family, and to obliterate the recollection*
" *of all the rest. The squire took pains to rouze*
" *these powerful, though dormant feelings, for his*
" *own private and ambitious purposes, when he*
" *first induced my father to interest himself so*
" *deeply in the political question of the Catholick*
" *claims. Thus you see how, in consequence of*
" *these unjust prejudices, imbibed before she was*
" *born, my poor mistaken father has wilfully*
" *deprived himself of the society and the services*
" *of his daughter. By denying to her what are*
" *her natural rights, he has driven her upon*
" *strangers for protection, and to a foreign land*
" *for a home! Alas! she is not the only sufferer!*
" *He has by the same blow destroyed his own*
" *happiness, and his own credit. He has cast*
" *from him, in his blindness, the support and the*
" *comfort of his age; and shall find his family*
" *divided when he shall speak with his enemies in*
" *the gate!!! Oh, Ben! I presume to see, in*
" *my own humble case, a parallel to that of*
" *the vast number of those whose fates hang*

" *upon the issue of this great question.* You " will know what I mean, when you shall be " less ignorant on the subject. Instruct yourself " without loss of time. Then judge between " us; — and may Heaven be your guide!"

Here the matter rests. Nothing can be done: there is no help, and therefore no hope for me! I may live to a respectable old age— I may see myself surrounded by my children, and my children's children — I have a prospect of the Common Council — I may rise to be Lord Mayor of London — but never, never can I forget my poor lost Margaret! I am endeavouring to obey her last injunction; and, notwithstanding my abhorrence of the subject, I am seeking for information on this detestable question — the cause of all my sorrows. I may do it with a bias; it would be unnatural if I did not. But, as far as I have yet gone, I do not see that the Roman Catholicks have either the power or the will to hurt us. I most sincerely hope I shall never become a politician; but, I must say, I begin to have opinions of my own on the subject; and opinions of my own are quite new things to me. I must likewise confess, that my anger against the general question is subsiding by degrees into a dislike to the opposers of these claims. This feeling is particularly levelled against my uncle; and, in one way, I am determined still to be revenged upon him. He shall have another Catholick in his family; for, if ever I marry at all, I will marry a Roman Catholick. Of all the people I have ever known, no one has appeared to me so faultless as Margaret. She, alas! alas! is lost to me and to the world. But she has taught me how well a Catholick can perform all the best duties of life, even against her own interests and her own dearest wishes.

But, when I marry my Catholick, I will take care to make one condition; I will have *one* security for my establishment—and one good security is enough — I must myself choose her confessor; — and, that one point conceded, a fig for all the rest.

Benjamin ——.

L.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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